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FROM
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LEONORA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DON PEDRO D'ALCANTARA, Governor of Seville.

ALONZO,
GONZALES, } Young Nobles in Don Pedro's Service.

DIEGO, Kinsman to Elvira.

AN ASTROLOGER.

DONNA ELVIRA, Wife to Don Pedro.

LEONORA, Wife to Alonzo.

INEZ, Daughter to Don Pedro.

BIANCA, Duenna to Leonora.

OFFICERS—LADIES—SERVANTS.

The Scene lies in the First Act at the Castle of Almedia, in Andalusia ; afterwards at Seville.

**THIS Play is founded on a domestic occurrence which
took place within these few years, in a family of high
rank in France.**

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Terrace before the Castle of Almedia.

Enter ALONZO and LEONORA.

LEONORA.

SURE there is magic in the hours, Alonzo !
 So swift they wing their brief and fugitive course
 Athwart the wide expanse, that I could deem
 Each day had prematurely reached its end,
 And time defrauded of its full completion.—
 Oh ! I would fain arrest them in their haste,
 And pause, and breathe o'er each delicious drop
 Of this full-brimming cup of happiness,
 Lest that my soul grow giddy.—Yes, my Love,
 I would reflect,—would gaze upon the blue
 Ethereal vault, how far more glorious now
 Than erst unto me, since in the eye of love

The heavens themselves shine brighter ; then I would
turn

Unto the rich and gorgeous earth, and draw
From her profusion, from each perfumed breeze
And painted gem, a sympathetic joy ;
Till, saturate with all this world can give
Of bliss, before the footstool of the Author
My over-swollen heart would pour the tide
Of thankful adoration.—Help me, Alonzo,
Help to relieve the burden of my breast ;
And if one spark of that celestial beam
Which lightens my existence, glimmer o'er thine,—
O let us prostrate bend, and utter forth
In unison of spirit the fervent voice
Of gratitude and praise !

ALONZO.

My Leonora,
The tongue would strive in vain to give true speech
Unto the soul's deep breathings, but that eye
Which to the bosom's core can penetrate,
And note its inmost workings, can discern
An eloquence in silence far beyond

The power of words.—Oh! with what headlong madness
Doth man despise the purest gifts of heaven,
Changing the healthiest aliment to poison!—
No, my beloved, 'tis not those whose course
Hath smoothly glided on beneath kind suns
And fanning airs, who most can feel the bliss
Of shelter and repose; but when the bark
Long by tempestuous surges tost, while many
A desolating blast has swept across it;—
When this frail shattered pinnace reaches the haven
Of peace, and hope, and joy, what tongue can speak
The secret ecstasy?

LEONORA.

Thou then hast suffer'd?
Hast felt the storms of life beat rudely on thee?
I do not ask the tale, I feel my heart
Would shrink at the first sound that told thy sorrows;
But henceforth shall they cease: thou dost not know
How potent anodyne is woman's love!
To man was given to master the wide world,
And wield the fate of empires; but to us
To strew the path with flowers, and attract

Within the silken meshes of affection
The lords of earth themselves. Oh, I will watch
Each motion of thy brow, as a fond mother
Hangs o'er her infant's cradle:—dost thou smile,
I too will laugh, be gay, and catch thy humour ;
Or art thou serious, to thy sage discourse
I will dispose my thoughts, and bear what part
My measured wit allows : but if one pang,
If aught of pain remembered come across thee,
Then all those tender, guileless, nameless wiles,
From the hid treasury of the female breast
I will call out to win thee from thy sorrow.
And should my fond device prove powerless,
A tear of sympathy shall wet thy cheek,
And every trace of care wash out for ever !

ALONZO.

Heaven, in its mercy, clothed in thy dear form,
Has sent my guardian spirit from on high
To guide and cheer me through the path of life,
Which else had been a lonesome wilderness !
My feverish soul already is refreshed
By thy pure love, as in the thirsty desert,

When on the wan and fainting pilgrim falls
Th' unhop'd for shower. No ! no more of pain
Can reach me now. My morning star has risen !
An opening paradise expands around,
Breathing of bliss and thee !—But should remembrance
Dare enviously intrude,—Oh, I will turn
From the dark fiend, and gazing on thy face,
Will own me blest indeed !

LEONORA.

From the moment,—

And it was but a moment, when mine eye
At first encountered thine, and read a language
Words ne'er can speak so well, until my father,
Presenting me his choice, commanded me
To obey and love thee ; when my conscious cheek,
Beneath the veil of maiden bashfulness,
Could scarce conceal the secret of its joy ;
Yes, from the day my weak bewildered heart
First gave itself a willing captive to thee,
Each fleeting hour seems to entwine the web
More closely round me, and had I the will,
Should want the force to break it !—

But, tell me, will not time, that icy power
Which all things chills, or dull satiety,
From the possession of unvaried love,
Work change upon thee, and thy heart but borrow
The cold and formal semblance of affection,
When all is dead within? Nay, do not start.—
A cloud is hanging on thy brow.—My Love,
I would not grieve thee.

ALONZO.

No! my Leonora,
No words of thine can wound me; but at time
Even the sweet melody of the bird of night
Falls on the ear discordant. O do not nourish
Fears, which though baseless, the too sensitive bosom
May yet invade, and cast a shadowy mist
To dim its radiant serenity.
Where should I turn? in thy soft eye I see
A beacon which should lead me to my rest;
In thy fair matchless form I trace an earnest
Of that ineffable beauty which ever beams
Before the Throne of Light;—and in thy breast
More than this earth could promise, a heaven below!

O waste not then a moment's happiness
In dark prognostic of some fancied evil.

LEONORA.

Yes, thou art right, Alonzo, it were idle,—
Nay, 'twere provoking the all-bounteous hand,
That gave the cup of blessing, to infuse
The gall of bitterness,—thus t' overlook
The fair and gracious prospect now before me,
And with intruding and distrustful eye
To search beyond the boundary visible
Into the dark abyss. No! thou Great Power,
Teach me with mind content, and thankful heart
T' enjoy the precious good Thou deign'st to offer;
And if it please Thy will inscrutable
T' abridge, or take it from me, teach me still
To bear the wreck of all that life holds dear,
With patience and submission!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Hall in the Castle.

Enter ALONZO and a SERVANT, from different sides.

SERVANT.

The Señor Don Gonzales is arrived,
With quick dispatch, from Seville.

ALONZO.

Who ? Gonzales ?

Conduct him hither, and make preparation
Of hospitable welcome.

(Exit SERVANT.)

Seville ! how does that name strike on my ear,
As the slow tolling of the summoning bell
To him, whose hours are numbered ! 'Tis a harsh
Ill-omened sound that grates my very soul !

But soft, he comes :—the gush of kindly feeling
May drown the pang of thought.

(*Enter GONZALES.*)

This were most worthy

Of those strong ties, Gonzales, which so long
Have knit us to each other, thus the first
To penetrate within the sanctuary
Of consecrated love and happiness,
And with a brother's sympathy to greet
The star that rises o'er my destiny.

GONZALES.

In truth, Alonzo, could my tardy steps
Have followed up the dictates of affection,
I had not waited e'en a few short weeks
To cheer my heart with witnessing the pure
And peaceful bliss of him, who from our boyhood,
In tender confidence has borne a half
Of each my joy and sorrow.—But, alas !
Such is the fate of those who owe submission
To other's will ! Yet, let me not complain.—
Were all the nobles of our native soil,
In high and generous bearing, mild aspect,

And with a nature open, only proud
When aught unworthy did confront their path :—
Were all the lords of Spain but like Don Pedro ;
Methinks the badge of service and dependence
Were, as the plume that waves upon our bonnet,
But light and graceful.

ALONZO.

'Twere an eloquent voice
That bore just tribute to his dignity.

GONZALES.

But to my mission.—'Tis not friendship which
Has brought me here ; but our illustrious chief,
Entrusting me with a letter to Madrid
Of highest import, charged me to convey
His summons to thee straightway to return,
And join his court at Seville.

ALONZO.

Me, to Seville !

It cannot be—but—

GONZALES.

How ! it cannot be,
When honour and thy duty call thee ?—What !

Have melting eyes, and love's soft dulcet notes
So much enthralled thy soul, that thou would'st pass
Thy days of youth and hope in silken bondage ?—
And wasting in ignoble dalliance
Thy best of life, stretched in luxurious ease
Within thy fairy bower, would only peep
In pity on the busy world below ;
And yielding the proud birthright of thy name,
Permit the meanest of the crowd t' ascend
The path of honour, and leave thee behind ?—
No, no ! the flame which warms a generous breast,
Lit at the shrine of beauty, but excites
To loftier deeds of more heroic daring,
Awakening its full energies.

ALONZO.

No more !

Thou wrong'st me much, Gonzales ;—let the banner
Of glory but expand, and thou shalt see
Alonzo is not backward in the strife,
Nor is mine arm grown feeble. But to Seville,
Wherefore such instant speed ?

GONZALES.

The trump of war
Will loudly sound ere long throughout the land—
And foremost in the front will float on high
The standard of Alcàntara.—Jealous then,
Lest that thine ill-timed absence at this hour
Should prove injurious to thy preferment,
He would, without delay, behold thy helm
Tower among his chosen chivalry.

ALONZO.

Ever the same, considerate of mine honour !
And I ! O God !—I come, I come, Gonzales,
And when the battle rages, were it my fate
Within my breast to catch the deadly dart
Designed for his, with joy I would receive—
And deem the hand that sent it had not erred !

GONZALES.

I doubt thy beauteous bride might wish the ardour
Of thy full gratitude were somewhat checked ;
And deem her smile might bring a charm as potent
As the barbed shaft. But, see, my time grows short ;
Conduct me to thy lady, I would pay

Loyal obeisance and devotion true
To her whom thou hast chosen as the sharer
Of thy respect and honour.

ALONZO.

By report
She well does know thee as my dearest friend ;
And has a foremost place in her regard
Reserved for one I so much love and cherish.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Leonora's Apartment in the Castle.

LEONORA *and* BIANCA.

LEONORA.

I know not why a sombre veil, Bianca,
So oft should shroud the brightest happiness :
But from my early childhood, be there aught
That fills my breast with more than wonted joy,
A soft and tender melancholy steals
Over my sense, as if humanity
Were jealous lest one moment should induce
Forgetfulness of that unstable tenure
By which the feeble sojourner of a day
Holds his possession.—And now, when my sky
Would seem so lovely that no envious cloud

Could dim its light, my wayward spirit turns,
Timid and shrinking, from the dazzling scene.
And courts the shade. In truth, thy tale is sad,
Is passing sad, and though it be a tale,
Weighs on me with a real anxiety.
He swore, thou saidst, to love and cherish her
With faith unchangeable ; but ere the vow
Was cool upon his lips,—deserted her !—
And she, poor heart, what could she do, but pine,
Till reason fled its sanctuary, and she died !—
Alas, alas, and is it thus that ever
Some noisome exhalation of the grave
In fair deluding semblance plays before us,
Decoying on to misery and destruction ?
Do strong affections only tune, and stretch
The chords of the frail heart, that they may break ?—
Well, be it so ! mine was not meant to wander,
Like those eccentric orbs which cross the sky,
Alone and cheerless. Frozen apathy,
Though girt about with barriers so secure
No hostile breath its solitary pride
Could e'er assail, were more intolerable

Than the worst ill which might beset my weakness ;
A very death in life !—I love, Bianca,
With such intensity of soul, that were
This hour to cast me on some hidden strand,
And scatter to the waves' rude buffetings
My all, my last of hope,—so that I veer,
Bereft of helm and anchor, to and fro,
Till Heaven in mercy snatched me hence for ever ;
Still would I bless my lot, that had allowed
So full a portion of felicity,
Though at one draught exhausted ; and would count it
A foretaste of that yet more exquisite cup
Of love, that ne'er can change, or fail, or lessen,
Which may be ours hereafter !

BIANCA.

I had not reckoned by my idle tale
To stir tumultuous feelings in thy breast,
Nor thine excitable mind disturb with fears
Of visionary evil ; but could the voice
Of one, whom cold experience has led
To a just estimate of this passing scene,—
Of one, who only wants th' endearing name

Of mother ! to make up unto the full
A mother's tenderness that yearns towards thee ;—
Oh ! could the tempering hand of age restrain
The too impetuous fervour of thy spirit,
Safer along th' uneven path of life
Thy steps would wend.—
Thy hopes, thy fears, thy happiness, are all
Too exquisitely hung, to bear the blast,
From which even those whom fortune favours most
She rarely shelters long.—Thy world's ideal ;
Thou liv'st upon a smile ; a look would chill,
A frown destroy thee ; and yet where is she
Who so serenely has pursued her course,
That love has flow'd unruffled to the end ?—
When in her latest hour thy sainted mother
Committed thee to my care,—“ Bianca,” said she,
“ To rear and cherish with a parent's care
This loved and tender charge I need not ask ;
Thine own affection has forestall'd me : but
When first beyond the convent walls her eye
Shall look out on the world, and her young heart
Awaken to sensations new and strong,

Should aught of that enthusiastic temper,
O'erquickened sensibility, be hers,
Which has through life convulsed my secret breast,
And prematurely bent me to the grave ;
Should this be hers, oh ! with most anxious zeal,
Control and guide her !—Hold before her eyes
The world in true perspective ere she enter.
Tell her that change and trial will await
Each scene, however fair it seem to smile ;
But tell her too, that though earth be not made
For perfect bliss, 'tis not for perfect woe,
Save when remorse, unquenchable within,
Consumes Hope's latent spring. Teach her to feel
Each check her fond confiding heart may prove
In its full utterings, but a means to strengthen,
And fit it better for what future struggle
Life may demand. In happiness, t' enjoy
With moderation ; and though it were weak
To scare each precious moment with the dread
Of vague impending ill, still let her not
Trust, on the bosom of th' unfaithful ocean,
To changeless calm. But should one wave o'erwhelm,

The next upheaving will to light restore,
And through the deepest gloom, when least expected,
The ray will burst. Thus may she reach secure,
As day declines, the haven of her rest,
Cheer'd by the golden radiance of even ;
And when her orb shall set, maturely sink
To everlasting peace !”

(Enter ALONZO and GONZALES.)

ALONZO.

My Leonora,

A most unhop'd-for guest, on whom my tongue
So oft has dwelt,—Gonzales, has come hither
To claim his portion of thy kind regard :—
For without thy sweet presence, friendship's self
Would still be lonely to me, and my heart
Would yearn and hunger for its wonted joy !

LEONORA.

Unless, my Lord, a partial hand has traced
The portraiture, methinks, to obtain a place
In thine esteem, might wake the competition
Of the best hearts of Spain.

GONZALES.

To fill up, Madam,
And colour true such favourable outline,
Would far surpass my weak and humble art ;
But if devotion might gloss o'er defect,
My zealous service bows to thy command,
And in such cause will never flag or fail.

LEONORA.

The courteous proffer of Alonzo's first
And dearest friend I thankfully accept,
And should occasion call, will put to proof.

GONZALES.

But may the bearer of ungracious tidings
Hope for a pardon ?

LEONORA.

Ha ! what means such speech
Of ominous import ?

ALONZO.

Ruder thoughts, my love,
Must to these halcyon hours ere long succeed :
War's harsh discordant voice too soon will rouse

Peasant and prince, and to Don Pedro's camp
My duty calls.

LEONORA.

To war!—the barbarous plaything
Of tyrants, to whose ear the widow's plaint,
The cry of fear, the groan of agony,
Are as soft breezes fanning the rank growth
Of glory nurtured by the blood of millions!
Oh! are not life's due penalties sufficient,
Disease, and death, and varied woes, t' appease
The greediest appetite of hellish hate;
But man in furious strife must rage 'gainst man,
Performing his arch-foe's accursed work?
What can the battle din—the hideous yell—
The gaping of foul wounds—the gory stream—
The shrieks of murder'd thousands—the red flame
Of desolation, spreading far and wide,
Which in an hour can change earth's loveliest garden
Into a blasted waste,—the happy mother,
The blushing bride, the weak and helpless child,
In the fell carnage 'reft of him—their all!—
Perhaps, too, driven from house and home, to die!—

What to thy generous, high-strung soul, Alonzo,
What can such scenes, such sounds afford of charm,
That thou must rush to arms?—Leave to the herd
Of savage men, more savage than the brutes
Which range the forest, and howl, but not in blood
Gorge their fierce nature, save when hunger calls:—
Oh! leave such arts to those. But be it ours,
Though the rude tempest rage around, t' enjoy,
Secure from all that can disturb or harm,
This dear, this tranquil home of peace and love!
My love, thou wilt not leave me?

ALONZO.

Ancient story

Tells us of one, who, in love's net enthrall'd,
Could 'midst his glorious labours pause, and doffing
The emblems of his high emprise, assume,
To please fair dame's caprice, th' embroider'd robe,
And bend his sturdy fingers to the distaff:—
Deem'st thou him thus ennobled in her sight?—
What! when our chosen bands of chivalry,
Alonzo's peers, shall seek him in their ranks;
Some one, perchance, may say,—“ Poor youth, he once

Gave glorious promise, as might well befit
His gentle race ; but now in lady's bower,
With silken toils, or twining her dark tresses,
He finds employ more suited to his nature."—
If my illustrious sire could for an hour
Revisit earth, and see the inheritor
Of his proud name and line, deaf to the call
Of glory, honour, duty, and deserting
For base ignoble ease his country's cause ;
Would he not hide his face for shame, and turn
In pity from the scene ?

LEONORA.

Forgive, forgive !

Yes, thy rebuke is just ;—womanly weakness
In an unguarded moment seizing me,
Drove my Castilian blood back to its fount.
Alonzo, I so love thee, that to spare
One pang, I would with joy pour out for thee
Each struggling drop in lengthen'd agony ;
But, mark me, more than e'en thy life, I love
Thine honour, and the breath which sullied it
Were less endurable than thy death itself.

Yes, yes, go forth, strong in thy father's name ;—
Strong in thy native virtue ;—strong in the mem'ry
Of thy past deeds of valour :—ever first
Where glory leads thee may thy crest be seen !
And should'st thou fall—Oh ! then my heart may break—
But a bright beam of pride and exultation
E'en at its latest close shall light mine eye ;
And on my tomb be but this legend grav'n—
“ Alonzo's bride ! ”—We need not part so soon ?

GONZALES.

Such sounds to heroism might e'en arouse
The veriest laggard. But, Madam, think not
The days to number of Alonzo's absence
In moping solitude. The Lady Inez
Requests that thou to Seville wilt repair,
In social intercourse to wile away
The tediousness of widowhood, until
Tidings of victory shall greet thine ear,
And peace restore him to thee.

ALONZO.

Ha !

LEONORA.

Inez of Alcàntara! Yes, our hearts
'Midst all the convent's inmates soon discover'd
A kindred tie, which bound us to each other,
And through existence ne'er can be dissolved.
Is she not beautiful? At her approach
Does not each pulse throb quick, each aspect brighten?
Yes, I will come, and as I watch and count
The leaden-wing'd hours which divide thee from me,
Her voice of love, like angel minstrelsy,
Shall lull my anxious care!—But why that look?
That quivering of thy lip?

ALONZO.

A passing pang;
As the rude nettle 'midst the wild flowers' bloom
May whiles intrude:—but—

LEONORA.

Speak, my Love, Alonzo!
Hide not one thought, one wish.—Thou wouldst not
have
Me quit this sanctuary of repose and peace?—
Say, is 't not so?—The dearest bond of friendship

I will at once, without regret, dis sever
At thy desire.—Thou dost distrust my youth
Amidst the revels of the gaudy court?—

ALONZO.

Distrust thee, Leonora!—I would commit
My very soul into thy charge!—No, No,
Let me not from its course divert one drop
Of the warm current of thy heart's affection.
Go where her voice demands ;—and may that hand
Which shields on the mountain's brow the tender lamb,
Protect thy gentle innocence!—We will
Forthwith to Seville.—

GONZALES.

Where we meet again.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Hall in the Governor's Palace at Seville.

*Enter DON PEDRO, DONNA ELVIRA, INEZ, DIEGO, and
OFFICERS on one side ; ALONZO on the other.*

DON PEDRO.

Welcome, Alonzo ! it would much repent me
Thus to abridge thy blissful course along
That current, which, alas how briefly ! flows
Through the dark sea of life ;—did I not know
That thy high soul, though twined in fairy bands,
And lulled by sounds of harmony most dear,
Would pine in thraldom, should the trumpet's clang
Arouse thee from thy dream, to find thyself
Amidst the compeers of thy youth forgotten.

In truth, I deem success but ill assured
Were thy bold presence wanting.

ALONZO.

My Lord, my Lord, one wish from thee were stronger
Even than the call of honour ;—how much more
Than the slight bonds of indolent enjoyment !—
One word of thine dissolves them.

ELVIRA.

Does the dart,
Launched from the eye of beauty, fall so pow'rless
On Don Alonzo's most obdurate breast ?
What ! can one word destroy the potent spell ?
Must sighs, and tears, and breaking of weak hearts,
Atone their rash presumption, who would dare
Claim thy forsworn affection ?—Thou wouldst stand
The tyrant of our soft and gentle race,
And think us playthings, baubles of an hour,—
To-day thy sport, to-morrow cast away,
And back recalled the next, with specious tale !—
I hope thy bride may not have yet discover'd
How frail her hold upon thy constancy,
And plighted faith.

INEZ.

E'en from her infant years

Her very soul was love, diffused around
In the exuberant flow of tenderness,
As yet unfixed ; but since its energies
Now centre in one object, that—thymself ;
O, couldst thou sear that springing of affection
With an unkindly look of chill neglect,
Heaven's wrath would burst on thee !—No, Don
Alonzo,

Thy heart is not as iron, heated now,
But straightway cold and hard again ; nor changes
With every changing wind. No, thou wilt cherish
Thy Leonora with unvarying truth,
And bless thy fate, which from the treasury
Of all earth holds most beautiful and precious,
Sought out this gem for thee !

ALONZO.

Thine eloquence gives language to my thoughts ;
But yet how far inadequate to express
What my full soul would utter !—No, though the voice
Of gratitude and honour may awhile

Exert more powerful influence o'er my mind
Than love's soft blandishment, think not my heart
Grown callous, or could waver for one moment
From its fidelity.—

INEZ.

But may I not see her?—
Enfold her in my arms?—Long months have passed
Since last we parted.

ALONZO.

Most impatiently
She counts each minute till ye meet again.

(Exeunt ELVIRA and INEZ.)

(Enter GONZALES from the other side.)

DON PEDRO.

So soon arrived, Gonzales!—thou hast sped
Thy way athwart the air with pluméd heel,
Like the God-messenger of old.

GONZALES.

Devotion,
And zeal, my Lord, could to the eagle's flight
Give swifter passage.

(Gives DON PEDRO a Letter.)

DON PEDRO—(*after reading the Letter.*)

So !—the die is cast !—

Our country calls, and it behoves us all,
Who feel our glory hang upon her welfare,
T' obey the voice. I am commissioned
With all dispatch to hasten to the frontier,
Where Spain's united force will soon assemble.
If there be one of those I see around,
Whose bosom fires not in her sacred cause,
Free let him now depart !—

(ALONZO, GONZALES, DIEGO, and OFFICERS draw
their swords.)

GONZALES.

Lead on ! my Lord,—we follow !—

DON PEDRO.

Sirs, 'tis well,—

I reckoned thus.—Among a host whose valour
And high desert stand paramount and equal,
It were not easy to select the one
Best fitted for advancement ; but as no
Unworthy motive guides my choice, let none
Hence draw invidious comparison.—

Alonzo, from the hour thy noble father,
As by my side upon the battle field
He breathed out his great spirit, left to me
Thee, the last scion of his ancient house,
With charge to train thee up as might become
Thy proud descent ;—with secret exultation
I have traced each germ from the paternal stem,
Fidelity and honour, dauntless valour,
With early-ripe discretion, spring in thee
And blow to full luxuriance ;—whence affection,
Nor judgment less, induces me to name thee
Next in command, and second to myself
In place and dignity.—

ALONZO.

O say not so !—

Thou with most partial eye dost view my merit.
Already is my load of obligation
Heavier than I can bear.—No, by thy side,
Let me with watchful zeal, and active arm,
Ward off each blow which menaces thy life,
But deck me not with honour and preferment :—
Review these gallant crests, others there are

Far worthier of command than I.—Gonzales
Would foremost urge thy host's resistless ardour
Through the opposing ranks.—

GONZALES.

No, no ! my Lord—
Let not the modesty of desert mislead
The wisdom of thy choice ! See how each eye
Sanctions thy judgment, and Alonzo's name
Hangs on each tongue confirming thy decree !

DIEGO.

Methinks, he best can fathom his own depth !—
That man is wisest who best weighs the strength
Of his own powers.—In this brave company,
One might be found who could with confidence
Take this rejected office.

DON PEDRO.

Aye, Diego
Perchance his name.—But no ; it is not lightly
My purpose has been framed, nor is real worth
Of weaker force because it may distrust
Its own ability. Thou seest, Alonzo,
That care, which from thy boyhood my affection

Has joyed t' afford thee, in too vivid colour :
Already have thy zealous love and service
Brought me return.—But if thy generous nature
Deem aught may still be due ;—the hour will come,
When in the thickest of the maddening strife
Thy towering plume will be my beacon-point ;
And as thou lead'st these bands o'er hostile heaps
To glory and to victory,—the balance
Of gratitude towards thy side will lean
With weight immeasurable, and my soul
Will beat to recognize in him I love,
A son right worthy of his glorious name.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment in the Palace.

Enter ELVIRA and DIEGO from different sides.

DIEGO.

Thy noble lord, with that deep penetration
By which intuitively he detects,
How close soe'er concealed, desert and merit,
Has deign'd t' appoint Alonzo to sustain
The second place of dignity and honour.

ELVIRA.

Alonzo ! Ha !—Don Pedro has regarded
Long with the blindest partiality
The son of his early and most cherished friend.
How bears he his preferment ?

DIEGO.

Oh, with that meek

And modest spirit which bespeaks true worth.
He would decline,—were most unfit,—his peers
Are all far meeter for such high command.
I ween, the whisperings of love are sweeter
Than the rude clash of arms.

ELVIRA.

Hast seen this idol
That with such empire rules her worshipper—
This all transcendent beauty?—

DIEGO.

Yes, she is fair—
And her soft glances beam like lightnings in
The summer sky ;—but 'tis a Seraph's grace,
Fitter to captivate romantic boyhood,
Than him whose heart and eye experienc'd,
So long have ranged this dazzling galaxy,
Where beauty shines in full developement.

ELVIRA.

Well, well !—May they be happy !

DIEGO.

So say I.—
Thou hast heard Gonzales is returned, performing

His mission with such speed as to obtain
High approbation from Don Pedro ?

ELVIRA.

Yes !

Gonzales' zeal and service ne'er are wanting.

DIEGO.

There are some busy tongues which fain pretend
Th' aspiring youth would dare to raise his eyes
Towards Alcàntara's daughter.

ELVIRA.

May be ! for Inez is a prize to attract
Most general suit.

DIEGO.

They would moreover whisper,
That this fair Goddess, from her lofty shrine,
Deigns turn a pitying eye on the adorer.

ELVIRA.

Alas ! poor female hearts are not of stone !—
And yet to wooing of the constant wave
The rocks themselves will soften.

DIEGO.

But his fortune ?

His blood may from the noblest source descend ;
But he who wears this brilliant gem, should place
So high its lustre, that all men might see,
Admire, and envy.—A good name and race
Are all Gonzales with his love can proffer.

ELVIRA.

Affection is a tardy calculator—
When in true sympathy two hearts unite,
The idle pageantries of worldly pride
Cement them not more closely.

DIEGO.

Hear me, Elvira !

Thou art no stranger to my long-nursed wishes.
And my degree, wealth, honour, not to name
Affinity to thee, put my pretensions
On a level with the proudest rivalry.
Surely thou wilt not now discountenance
The hopes thy zeal has foster'd ?—

ELVIRA.

But if her heart
Has elsewhere wandered !—Has she ever given
One look encouraging ?

DIEGO.

In truth, her eye

Is as immoveable as marble bust
Of monumental charity. But hearts
Are things most variable ; might not then
Her's change in one short moon from Arctic cold
To torrid temperature ? Respect, esteem,
And the substantial good that wealth affords,
Are they not guides far safer through life's journey,
Than the fierce fitful blaze of blinded passion,
Which for a while may lure its victim on,
But soon leaves desolate !—

ELVIRA.

Then to secure

'Gainst such portentous evil, thou wouldst take
Don Pedro's daughter to thy trusty charge,
With wide Alcântara's inheritance,
Regardless if her inclination follow ?

DIEGO.

No, no, thou wrong'st me.—Let me but obtain
Th' approval of her father, I will woo—
Aye, as the warrior woos devoted city.

With melting sighs and whispers I will mine,
And eyes half raised in bashful diffidence ;
Till that before appliance unremitting
The wall begin to totter :—rushing then
With an o'erwhelming storm of protestations,
Huge vows, and all those tried and doughty arms
Which woman's heart can never long sustain,
Soon shall my standard floating high, proclaim
The prize my own !—

ELVIRA.

Most valiantly achieved !

But mark—in an hour of confidence Don Pedro
Gave me a pledge in his own hand, that never
Would he select a partner for his child,
Until this pledge restored conveyed my sanction :—
So far 'tis well.—But think not his assent
Will e'er outstep her own. Thou knowst him well ;—
'Twere easier to uproot th' embedded rock,
Than to induce him with parental power
To rule her choice. Then hasten to the field,
Put forth thy most insidious arts, and pour
With two-fold force thy battery on the breach.

Meanwhile, whate'er my tongue by secret praise
And bland insinuation can effect,
Shall be with zeal employed.

DIEGO.

Farewell ! farewell !

Thou hold'st a bond of endless obligation,
Making me servant to thy love—or hate.—

[*Exit.*]

ELVIRA.

My love or hate !—These are mysterious words !—
Whom should I love or hate but . . . ?—Must I shrink
Ever before the gaze of that keen eye
As from a basilisk, and obey the will
Of his malignant nature, as a slave
Crouches with fear beneath th' uplifted scourge ?
What can he read in my weighed, wary speech,
And tempered mien ?—"Tis coward consciousness
Which gives a form to every shadow, bowing
My spirit to the dust !—Ye powers of ill,
How must ye exult, when ye behold my bosom
Torn by conflicting passions, which your arts
Lash into madness, till my brain goes round,

D

And my soul faints !—And yet upon my brow
Must cool dissimulation wreath the smile
Of placid calm !—Would that this earth might open
And suck me down !—or that some gracious drops
Of deep oblivion's spring might bathe my temples,
And lull me to forgetfulness for ever !—

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

A Street.

Enter ALONZO and GONZALES.

GONZALES.

Alonzo, there 's a sadness on thy brow,
As if the demon Melancholy had set
His mark upon thee.—From felicitations
And friendly greetings thou dost seem to shrink.
Yet are not love successful, honour, favour,
And merited preferment—all that Fortune
Most prodigal could offer, cast before thee?—
Still she can scarcely win one smile of thanks.

ALONZO.

'Tis true, 'tis true!—And yet there is a state,
When to the morbid taste whate'er is sweet
Turns chief to bitterness.

GONZALES.

Yes, when disease
Corrupts the strength ;—or chill disappointment
Cankers the heart.—But who could, more secure,
Confront the lapse of years, and time defy
To change or mar one portion of thy bliss ?

ALONZO.

When a poor struggling wretch clings to the rock
As the infuriate billows foam around,
Lengthening his agonies with savage joy,
And views above a flowery paradise
Tempting his grasp,—but to elude for ever !—
If this be bliss secure, such bliss is mine !—
Hast thou not noticed, in their gilded shrines,
The mouldering relics of those holy men
Whom the church venerates with pious love,
Decked in the gorgeous robes of mortal pomp,
Whence death glares out more grimly ? Such is place,
Distinction, honour,—all that man most covets,—
But vain and lifeless pageant, when the soul
Is cold and sick within !—

GONZALES.

What fearful meaning

Wouldst thou conceal?—

ALONZO.

Look on my care-worn cheek,

My furrowed brow!—When the earth groans and
shakes,

Dost doubt the inward fires, albeit pent up,

Which prey upon her vitals?—

GONZALES.

Speak, I implore thee, speak!—but not thus darkly:—

Open thine inmost breast;—show all to him

Who loves thee as the dearer part of self;—

Whose faith, though all things else should fail around,

Would stedfast stand.—O let me pour a balm

To soothe thy sufferings, or bear my portion.—

A friendly tongue is as the dew of Heaven,

Freshening the cold and thirsty soul to gladness!

ALONZO.

Are there not sights from which affection's eye

Must turn away?—She would, with tender sorrow,

Weep o'er the breathless limbs of him she loves,

Stretched on the decent death-bed ;—but to look
Within the dark pestiferous charnel-house,
Is loathsome and appalling.—

GONZALES.

Dost thou doubt—
Or think'st me a weak girl, who would avert
Her pallid face from aught of fearful aspect ?—
Count'st my affection of such delicate hue
As sickens at unseemly vision ?—No !—
I love thee through all change the same, Alonzo,
Through good or evil ;—nay, perchance more dear,
When heaviness hangs on thee ;—as a mother
Feels more intensely the low plaint of pain,
Than the sweet smile of healthful infancy.—
There 's not a thought e'er flitted through my brain
Thou hast not known.—I do not claim from thee
A confidence thou wouldst withhold.—My friendship
Is warm, but not obtrusive.

ALONZO.

O, look not
So chill, nor add thus to the weight already
Too heavy on me !—Thou shouldst read my soul,

Though thy glance pierce me as the bolt of Heaven ;—
I would bare my secret bosom to thy sight,
And show thee all—yes all :—but honour sets
The seal of eternal silence on my lips.

GONZALES.

Enough, Alonzo !—as a sentry guards,
With solemn awe and half-averted eye,
The moonlit cemetery, will I watch thee ;
And, when my voice or arm can bring relief,
Am ever at thy call.

ALONZO.

Most kind ! for friendship
Knows no severer test than when reserve
Restrains her communings. But, prithee, tell me ;—
Am I deceived—Is not thy countenance
Rife with some thought half willing, half reluctant
To break into utterance ?

GONZALES.

Yes, I sought to claim
Thine aid and counsel, wert thou not absorbed
By thine own griefs.

ALONZO.

To render to thee service
Would soothe, far more than if thou sharedst them.
All that a friend for friend, or man for man
Can do, is at thy call.

GONZALES.

Know then my secret !—
Long had I felt and yielded to the spell
Don Pedro's daughter throws unconscious round ;—
Yet nursed my flame in silence ;—till—but needless
'Tis to recount how first my hopes awoke ;—
Suffice it, that, my raptured soul has drawn
Confession, that, her father's sanction gained,
Perchance I might not sigh in vain.

ALONZO.

—Then happy,
Thrice happy mayst thou be !—O, if the kind
And gentle ministers of love can lead
A worn and troubled spirit to repose ;
How must such tender mercies fertilize
That soil, which only wants this genial warmth
To swell the latent seeds to life and joy !

GONZALES.

Sure there 's no pang so deadly that this power
Cannot assuage !—its gracious influence might
Clothe even the face of sterile desolation
With glad luxuriance.—But, 'tis thine aid
Which can alone conduct to the attainment—
For since my name, mine ancestry, and sword,
Are all I boast of heritage ; to thy voice,
And that just estimation which gives strength
To whatsoe'er thou urgest, I would straight
Convey my high pretensions to Don Pedro
With hope and confidence.

ALONZO.

Wouldst have me bear
To him such message, when his each kind word
Is painful to me as the day-spring's brightness
To the gazing eye ?—But no !—I seek Don Pedro,
And with that earnestness the heart can speak
Will plead thy cause.—Give me thy company,
My Leonora waits thy welcome hither.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV.

A Room in Alonzo's house at Seville.

LEONORA, INEZ, *and* BIANCA.

LEONORA.

Nay, nay, that blush, my Inez, doth denote
An inward conscience which betrays thy words.
Come, a few months of absence have not wrought
A change so great, that thou wouldst strive to hide,
What thy cheek's varying flitting hues disclose,
From her who used to scan thine every thought
Ere yet matured, in fond exchange of love?—
Now, tell me,—'mid this crowd of gallant youth,
Some one there is, whose breast would proudly beat
Could he but read that drooping eye aright,
And hear thy secret orisons?—

INEZ.

Thou wouldst not
Wish me with cold indifference regard
Transcendent merit ?

LEONORA.

With indifference !
I would that word were from our speech erased.
I own it not !—No, when desert and honour
Start boldly from the canvass, Nature herself
Bids us esteem and love.

INEZ.

'Tis true ;—and in Gonzales are combined
All that a woman could desire t' adorn
Him whom her heart approves. His lofty front,
His noble mien and aspect, where command
Competes with mildness, are as sure a guide
To his firm faith and loyalty, as the shade
That falls upon the dial marks the day's
Advancing age.

LEONORA.

But, see, he comes !—Methinks,

LEONORA.

Thy wit and gallantry would bear the prize
Even at the blind God's renowned tribunal.
But there's an eye, one glance from which, I deem,
Would bring a fairer guerdon than th' acclaim
Of full-mouthed approbation.

GONZALES.

From that beam
My soul derives its being :—like the flower
Which, warm with life and joy, expands her bosom
Before the genial sun-ray, but shrinks up
When her loved lord declines. One gentle look,
One word, were prouder tribute than the shout
Hailing the victor home !—My Inez, since
Thou hast deigned to vivify hopes buried long
Beneath unworthiness,—thou wilt not then,
Before these generous witnesses, whose hearts
Harmonious beat with ours, unsanction now
By silence my aspirings, and condemn
To darkness and despair ?

INEZ.

Thou canst not, sure

Think me an actor on the scene t' assume
A varying countenance, and play a part
As suits the hour's caprice ?—Judge not my faith
And constancy thus lightly. What I whisper'd
To the confessional of thy secret ear,
I never would disclaim, if called to stand
Before the world's full conclave. No, Gonzales,
I long had marked thee with approval, silent,
And scarce e'en to myself defined, which haply
Might ne'er have reached affection, hadst thou not
Revealed in the speaking language of thy looks
What no heart can mistake. This my avowal
I here confirm,—and were I to select
One as the sharer of my destiny,
Would hold my hand to thee.

GONZALES (*kissing her hand.*)

O, hear her ! hear her !

Write the decree, ye ministers above !—

Through life, through death, though all earth's powers
oppose,

She 's mine ! She 's mine !

ALONZO.

Thou then hast counted well the sacrifice,
Which thou wouldst make for him, whose goodly name
And arm fill up his sum of Fortune's favour.
Among the rival host, has not thy father
Ever expressed one wish to guide thy choice ?

INEZ.

Don Pedro ! no ;—but perseverance leads
Donna Elvira to her kinsman's merit.

ALONZO.

Diego !

INEZ.

Aye ! whose tongue's smooth flattery
Strives with unequal strength to cloak his malice.
Yes, Don Alonzo, I have held the balance,
And on one side have heaped all that most tempts
The world's blind denizens, yet it weighs light,
If the opposing scale contain one drop
Of genuine affection. Then my mother's
Portion, and of Alcàntara's broad lands
Such as will own me mistress, might suffice
A more immoderate thirst for wealth and power :

And were this not, a soldier's wife should share
Content a soldier's lot. No, let my father
Approve my heart's selection, nought can shake
My steadfast purpose. But should he deny,
Within the convent's solitude my breast
Shall pour its tide of grief, till the bright ray
Of love divine efface all meaner care ;
And in the blest communion of Heaven,
Forget itself to peace !

GONZALES.

Oh ! do not name
A thought, at which my blood freezes with horror !
Alonzo, with the strong eloquence of friendship,
Unto Don Pedro will disclose our love.
To him no generous feeling e'er appeals
With fruitless call, nor does the glare that dims
The common gaze of mortals dazzle him ;
To his paternal tenderness thy heart
Will never plead in vain.

ALONZO.

With thy permission then, I will repair
As thine accredited herald to Don Pedro

And through his child t' effect his happiness,
Will be my dearest service.

INEZ.

Willingly
Do I entrust my fate unto the charge
Of one so true and zealous.

LEONORA.

Go, my love !
Thou well dost know persuasion's gentle words.
Go, and may'st thou, as the bright God of day,
Disperse the dimness of uncertainty,
And leave the horizon cloudless !

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Palace.

DON PEDRO and ALONZO.

DON PEDRO.

Thou arguest right, Alonzo !—To debase
 The blood of centuries with an alliance
 Low and unequal, were to force a breach
 Upon that pride which fences the Palladium
 Of pure nobility. But happiness
 Is far too coy to fix her to the car
 Of wealth and pomp ; and thus to bribe her stay
 Were bootless, as the attempt with ice to raise
 A solid structure, which may gaily glitter
 An hour in the sun, but straight dissolves.

Could earth's vain baubles purchase her, perchance
She might have still been mine !—Alas ! my boy,
My long-lost boy, how does fond memory,
Yet through the lapse of seasons, when still night
Slumbers around, how does my soul cling to thee !
That beautiful form, that rich abundant promise
Which would have ripened to most perfect manhood,
All blighted, strewn !—Alonzo, thou dost bear
His semblance ; as your years were equal, hence
Haply my love for thee so much is quicken'd.
Oh ! 'twas a deadly blow that snatch'd him hence !
Thou'rt gone, thou'rt gone, my child ; my longing sight
Shall never view thee more !

ALONZO.

That dispensation
Which strikes us where we least can bear the wound,
We may support, but who will dare to scan ?
Yes, even still my mind loves to recall
In him the cherished likeness of a brother.
Had he not fallen ere his course began,
How would he have outstripped in glory's race
The foremost competition !

DON PEDRO.

But, let it pass.

It were unseemly weakness to re-open
Griefs, on which time has laid his healing hand.
But since the fatal stroke which left me sonless,
My earliest thoughts, my latest prayers, are all
Centred in her, my Inez,—the sole pillar
Left to my tottering house. My dearest wish
Is to secure her happiness ; but yet
How vain the hope, if her young heart's affections
Be from their course diverted ! Could I lean
On her the prop of my declining age,
If her pale cheek have lost its blushing pride,
From tears I caused to flow ? No, no, her choice
Is but a guide to mine.

ALONZO.

What floods of sorrow,
What bitterness of spirit had been spared
To suffering man, had ruthless passions never
The light bands of parental power converted
To chains of grievous weight.

DON PEDRO.

I long had nursed

A secret hope, that sympathy would draw
You to each other, and in imagination
To see thee fill the place of him I lost,
Was soothing thought ; but 'twas not thus decreed !—
Since then a warm and mutual attachment
Unites Gonzales to my Inez, fear not
That worldly views would tempt me to dis sever
This sacred knot. In truth, your sires did both
Compete in my regard ; and as Gonzales
Was only second to thy noble father,
So do their sons in my affection rank.
If, too, appearance argue true, he wants
But fit occasion to display the warrior,
Blent with the traits of gentle courtesy ;
Nor is there one more worthily could claim,
Or proudly justify, my Inez' love.

ALONZO.

'Tis but his due. Thou canst anticipate
No more than his devotion and respect
Will strive to pay thee.

DON PEDRO.

Then direct him hither.—

But hold ; there is a voice must yet be gained.
Alonzo, thou dost know—thou must have noted,
Elvira loves me not. She ne'er could brook
Her youth and beauty should in unequal tie
Of years be bound. Her haughty spirit chafes
Even at each test of tenderness my zeal
Would fain bestow ; and I of late, too weak
To her solicitation, gave my promise,
That our consents should join in the bestowing
My daughter's hand. Then haste to her, Alonzo ;
Urge thou the suit with the warm eagerness
Thou now hast pleaded it. Thy voice has weight.—
Nay, nay, thou oft canst move her will, when I
Should to the deaf rocks sing. Redeem the pledge ;
And may benignant Heaven smile upon
This union, where virtue vies with love !
Then hasten.—Thou dost mark ?

ALONZO.

My Lord !

DON PEDRO.

How now!—

'Tis no ungrateful embassy ; nor fear
Thy mission may be profitless.

ALONZO.

Oh ! pardon !

My brain grows dizzy,—volumes of dark thoughts
Roll over and obscure in Stygian night !
Thou look'st amazed !—Ha ! dost thou search within ?—
Pierce not so keenly !—Tell me, my Lord !—Don Pedro !
Had it been thy fate to take into thy bosom
One whom with tenderness thou fosteredst,
A helpless child, and to maturity
Reared up and nurtured with a father's care,
Had he deceived thy love, defrauded thee
Of what thou held most precious ; stung thee—aye,
Most basely stung thee—

DON PEDRO.

Whence such portentous mystery in thy words ?

ALONZO.

But though he injured, yet did his heart yearn to thee,—
And agonized with pangs no tongue can speak,

No time can heal or mitigate ; did he,
Low crouching in the dust, urge thee, in pity,
To take his dearest zeal, his last life-drop
Unto thy meanest service.—Oh ! my Lord,
How wouldst thou look on him who pleaded thus ?

DON PEDRO.

Alonzo, thou dost try me with a speech
I fain would hear from none, and least from thee !
Th' offence must bear its measure and its weight.
Whate'er that be which preys upon thy spirit .
Is yet in secret hid, nor would I probe
Too deeply. But mark, if th' injury be that
Forgiveness yet may reach,—and oh ! may I
Be spared a wound to which it may not reach :—
Do I not look for mercy from that Power
To whom each word, aye, each unutter'd thought,
Were it but strictly weigh'd, would give offence ;
And yet He loves me still ?—
No, did he seek to silence in his soul
Th' upbraiding voice, the inward sense of ill ;
Forth to the battle-field ; there let him search
Meet expiation from his country's foes ;

I ask no costlier sacrifice than this,
To see him vindicate her rightful cause,
Th' avenger of her wrongs.

ALONZO.

Angels of grace !

Hear I aright ?—But—strange bewilderment
Confounds my senses. Whither have they wander'd ?
What has my tongue disclosed ? My o'erwrought mind
Has in pursuit of some wild phantasy
Transgress'd the bounds of reason.

DON PEDRO.

What that is

Which thus disturbs thy peace, thy tongue hath not
Revealed, nor do I ask ; yet this thou knowest :
That he who fondly cherished thee through boyhood
Will fail not to thy riper years. But if
Thou brood o'er that which e'en to my affection
Thy labouring soul would hesitate to utter,
Go to that heaven-sent messenger of grace,
Tell out thy griefs to him. Father Lorenzo
Is stranger to no varied shape of ill,
And can select from th' inexhaustible store

Entrusted to his charge, a remedy
Omnipotent to heal. Even though despair
O'erspread its darkness, he could yet bring down
A ray of hope, of pardon, and of peace !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

An Apartment in Alonso's House.

LEONORA *and* BIANCA.

BIANCA.

I fear, my Leonora, the hoarse ravings
Of the wild testy winds, with rude intrusion,
Alarmed thy rest. Thine eye droops languidly ;
Nay, I could trace the vestige of a tear,
As if thou hadst wept the throes and pangs of Nature.
But is 't not sweet, when all things rage around
In warring agony, and darkness shades
The mourning world, to feel the lambent flame
Serenely glow within thy tranquil breast ;
And hear, amid the howlings of the storm,
The soft still sound of peace ?

LEONORA.

The elements,
In their most furious strife, but rock the cradle
Of slumbering happiness. But when dark fears
And apprehensions, dim though sure forebodings,
Press on the soul, each cloud fantastic wears
A frown of menace ; the forked lightning darts
Wrath from offended Heaven ; and the low
Moaning of deep-mouthed winds prophetic wails
Their death-cry.

BIANCA.

That susceptibility
Which gives a substance to each passing fancy
Whence the brain's fitful workings lord it o'er
The judgment's sound control ; oh !—it will lead
Full many a weary step astray, up-raising
Gaunt spectres at each turn,—shouldst thou not break
The spell that holds thee captive. How wilt thou
Bear the least ill that life too surely offers,
If thine imagination fill th' abode
Of bliss itself with vague and shapeless terrors ?

LEONORA.

Reality can take no form more fearful
Than plays before the eyes of horror-struck fancy,
Anticipant of that she dreads but knows not.
Legions of beings invisible have charge
To lead earth's helpless wanderers along
Their path, protecting from its lesser perils.
But when impending fate too heavily lowers,
Pitying they watch and mourn, and whispering warn
The coming doom. Oh ! now I hear their voice,
As thunder rolling in the distant sphere
Portends the storm. My day of bliss is past !
'Twas exquisite, though brief !—but flown, flown by,
Like a wing'd dream !—Nearer, Bianca,—let not
The sound o'erpass the precincts of thine ear,
Lest that its very echo should excite
And goad my mind beyond restraint.—Alonzo,
My all, my world, whom but to see and hear
Is life, is being ;—around whom my feebleness
Hath twined its fibres ; one of which to sever
Were pain too keen to bear ;—such ties are pow'rless

To bind his heart ; it has burst through from all,
And left me here alone !

BIANCA.

Thy Lord's affection
Estranged !—impossible !—nay, its fond ardour
Is in his countenance as strongly stamped,
As at the hour which gave him thee.

LEONORA.

Alas !

Thou ne'er hast loved !—Thine eye can but glide o'er
The surface ; and decay may sear the core,
Though the bloom gild the cheek. There is a pulse
In actions most unmark'd ; the lip's slight trembling ;
The palpitation of the lid ; th' inflexion
Of the tuned voice ; a word, a look, a motion,
These can denote affection's ebb and flow,
Strength or decline, to the experienced
Impassioned scrutiny of her who loves ;
As certain as the life-blood's current shows
The body's health. That gaze which fed upon
The shiftings of my brow, and strove to catch
Each half-formed fantasy, is now down-fix'd

In cold abstraction. Words scarce utter'd seem
Only to cover thoughts which shun pursuit.
Nay, does he press my cheek, the tenderness
Of his embrace is deaden'd to the salute
Of chill habitual greeting ;—for his heart,
His heart is far away !—

BIANCA.

Oh ! think not so !

Weightier matters now engage his thoughts.
Honours and high advancement will produce
New cares ; and though each glance may not emit
Its ray of love, and he, pre-occupied,
Appear abstracted to thy fond regard ;
Deem not the flame grown cold. When the light clouds
Pass o'er the sun's bright disk, the dappled sky
Shows but a varied and more beauteous aspect,
And Nature still smiles on, nor doubts his face
Will soon emerge to renovate her joy.

LEONORA.

My sun's eclipse no time will dissipate !—
My too presentient spirit can discover
Nought in perspective but more deepening shade

Of cheerless, hopeless, endless gloom !—

BIANCA.

Thou wilt,

Methinks, allow the augury of the stars :

It chanced that at the hour which gave thee birth

A way-worn stranger reached thy father's castle,

Claiming the rights of hospitality.

His form was bent, and his swarth cheek was lined

With furrows, which seemed more from toil than age.

His long loose robe, the variegated folds

That wrapped his head, the grizzled beard that swept

His breast, bespoke his race the ancient foes

Of our true faith, who oft-times wander over

From Afric's neighbouring coast, culling of simples ;

Or to muse over dreams of greatness past,

Here in the land where their proud crescent sunk

Before the Cross and our forefathers' sword.

Soon as the event he heard which lit each face

With joy, he proffered with mysterious art

To rob the stars of knowledge, and disclose,

By reckonings drawn from their coincidence,

The current of thy future life. Thy mother,

Awe-struck and doubting, could not yet repel
 Her anxious, her too natural desire,
 To search amid the secret thoughts of time
 The destiny of her child. It booteth not
 To tell the wondrous spells by which the orbs
 Of Heaven were summoned to the Wizard's pow'r ;
 Suffice it that he thus pronounced thy fate.—
 “The fawn shall on the mountain wild and free
 Sport on, until, with silken noose, the hunter
 Enthral ;—captivity shall then be dear,
 Dearer than liberty.—The stars unite
 In fair concurrence.”—Then he muttered low
 Some words inaudible, and loudly laughed,
 And straightway disappear'd.

(*Enter ASTROLOGER.*)

LEONORA.

Bianca, look !

Screen me, in mercy !—screen me from that gaze !—
 That terrible eye !—

ASTROLOGER.

The fawn *has* ranged her course—
 The hunter's toils *have* snared—the stars *have* shone

In most benignant concord.—Time wheels on
In ceaseless change.—The blackest night succeeds
The brighter day.—Mirth is washed out with tears!—
Christian ! we meet again !—

[*Exit.*]

(*LEONORA falls back into BIANCA's arms.*)

(*Enter INEZ.*)

INEZ.

Eternal Powers !—

My Leonora !—Ah ! her eye now opens,
But wildly rolls !—

LEONORA.

What voice is that ?—O hide,
Hide me,—I cannot bear that scathing glance !—

BIANCA.

'Tis past, my love ;—'tis past !—The Lady Inez
Awaits thy scattered thoughts' return.

LEONORA.

My Inez !

INEZ.

What strange event thus agitates thy mind ?

LEONORA.

A phantom crossed my sight !—Thou shalt know all
Say that thou lovest me !—

(Embracing her.)

—All is not lost

While thy affection lives !—Nay, do not speak,
Lest thou destroy the charm !—

INEZ.

Whence such untimely doubts, and ominous words ?
When has my love e'er failed, that now thou seek'st
Assurance of its long-tried constancy ?
With breathless haste I hither came, to bear
My own glad tidings to thee. Don Alonzo
Has from my father full consent obtained
To my union with Gonzales.

LEONORA.

'Tis rashness !—madness !—Stop !—O, pause !—Let not
Man, heartless man, erect one trophy more
O'er our deluded race !

INEZ.

What ! dost thou doubt
His loyalty and faith ?—

LEONORA.

I doubt !—O, no !—

Give him thy hand, my Inez,—smile on him,—
Laugh when he laughs,—yes, be that airy thing,
Which, like the gossamer, wantons in each breeze.—
But yield him not thy love—trust not thy peace—
Tis of too delicate mould for other's care.—
O, if thou value all that makes life dear,
Surrender not thy heart !—

INEZ.

Astonishment

Chains all my senses !—Speak, my Leonora,
Nor torture thus !—

LEONORA.

Not now—not now—hereafter,

INEZ.

Wherefore such mystery ?—But my father waits.
To-morrow I will revisit thee.

LEONORA.

To-morrow !

Yet what events unknown, undreamt, may rise
Between the present minutes, and the dawn

Of the next sun ! Thou lov'st me now, my Inez ;
But wilt thou change ? O, no, thou art a woman ;
And woman, alas ! but too devoutly loves !—
To-morrow !—Until to-morrow, then, farewell !

(LEONORO and INEZ embrace.)

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

An Apartment in the Palace.

Enter ELVIRA and ALONZO from different sides.

ELVIRA.

Alonzo here !—What ! are thy chains already
Too heavy for thy free and volatile spirit ?
And dost thou in thy durance pine and fret,
Mourning thus late thy self-inflicted bonds ?
Would now thy renegade heart return to her
Whom it has scorned, deserted, and renounced,
And seek, with protestations, sighs, and tears,
To sooth her indignation ? Thou wouldst draw,
Methinks, too largely on that fund of kind
Forbearance, which, alas, so prodigal,
Nature bestows upon our sex's weakness.

ALONZO.

Those vows, which at the altar my full soul
Poured forth, did not from the delirium flow
Of blinded passion. Love, as the eye of Heaven
Might view complacent, lit my nuptial torch,
Which never can be quenched but with the flame
Of life itself.

ELVIRA.

In mockery com'st thou then?—

ALONZO.

In mockery!—

ELVIRA.

To display thy new-gained trophies
To one despised,—insulted? Breathedst thou not
The self-same sighs to me? Speak'st thou of faith
To her, whom thou most basely hast betrayed?

ALONZO.

Hold! hold! in mercy, hold! Zeal for my friend,
And duty to Don Pedro bring me hither.

ELVIRA.

Thy duty to Don Pedro!—Was it that,
Was wont to wing thy steps impatient to me,

When in each hidden glance a tale was told
My heart believed too well? Was it affection
To *him*, that tuned thine every word with sound
Which roused the pulses of my throbbing heart
To long forgotten life?

ALONZO.

All thy most keen reproach, thy bitterest tone
Upbraiding can inflict, I would sustain,
Nor shrink from the endurance, could it assuage
That pang, which deathless, sleepless, remediless,
Corrodes within. But do not lay a charge
On my sore-burdened spirit yet more heavy
Than the offence! 'Twas not—thou know'st—'twas not
Accursed seductive arts that won thy love.
Guileless I met thee, and when Don Pedro's absence
Long left thee to my care, th' unguardedness
Of free and daily converse snared my breast.
'Twas not premeditated perfidy
'Gainst *him*! O call it by what name ye choose,
Aught, aught, just Heaven, but *that*!

ELVIRA.

'Tis true!—too true!—

Thine was no deep-laid plot, no painful toil !
Thine eyes scarce summon'd, and my heart surrender'd :
Whence now contemned and trampled on, it draws
Its meet reward. Boast my humiliation !—
But, mark,—there is a quiver ever ready
To the revenge of slighted woman, fraught
With weapons deadlier far than empty words !
When some malignant planet led Don Pedro
To seek me from my father ; dreams of grandeur,
Ambition, power, joined my sire's command,
And gave my hand—my heart's young freshness had
Devotedly been lavish'd on another ;
But fate had placed its barrier between.
'Twas then my aching bosom traced in thee
Resemblance to its idol :—my cold veins
Anew were quickened, my affections sought
Their wonted channel, and I looked on thee,
And loved, and dreamt of happiness !—

ALONZO.

Of happiness !—Dost think that she who springs
From Heaven, would shed her gentle influence o'er
The fitful throbbings of unhallowed love ?

'Tis not *such* love that's borne upon the gale
Which blows from Paradise ! And I who owe
More than my life's whole service can repay ;
To whom in undoubting confidence he trusted
That charge, most sacred before God and man—
That I, dared raise one look, whisper one sigh,—
Yes, foster in my breast one thought toward thee
Angels might blush to know !—
Almighty Power ! Oh ! it was the hand
Of Grace, indeed, that turned aside the blow
Which dark despair against my life had pointed,
E'er yet too late, and led my horror-struck
Bewildered soul with chastisement, yet kind
And tender mercies, to the throne on high
To sue for pardon.—
Elvira, thou may'st frown indignant on me,
Upbraid and taunt ; nor would I deprecate
Thine utmost wrath, were its full force directed
'Gainst me alone. But breathe not, I implore thee,
One vengeful thought toward him, who only erred
In loving thee too well—and trusting me !
Oh ! wound him not through her, in whom his all

Of joy is folded. She her generous heart
Has yielded to Gonzales ; and Don Pedro
Retards but his consent, till by restoring
The pledge his confidence afforded thee,
Thou grantest thy approval.

ELVIRA.

—And let Love

Look down triumphant from his shrine of peace,
In scorn upon the ruin at his feet !
Shall *she*, like that vain-glorious bird which spreads
Its feathers in the sun, bask in the beam,
While from the light I shrink, as if my breast
Were as an open scroll ?—No, never, never !—
The tempest which has swept o'er me, shall range
Alike on all !—Communion allays
The pangs of death itself !—

ALONZO.

Among those Furies that with iron force
Hold, while they lash with snaky scourge, their victim,
Has the arch-demon Envy fixed his fangs
Relentless in thy breast ?—The dark foundations,
The adamantine depths of Hell itself

Were laid by Envy!—Its foul caverns vibrate
From the innermost abysses with his yells.
Is it not fearful then, while yet we breathe
The upper air, and the warm sun shines on us,
And Nature laughs in innocent glee around ;
To echo from our breasts those sounds which scare
The realms of night itself with deeper horror ?
When headlong passion drives its wild career
Impetuous on ;—e'en from destruction's jaws
There is a hand may snatch, and turn our steps
To path of safety.—But if, harbouring
Impotent rage against our fellow-worm,
We do pollute the spring of mortal love,
How can we hope for mercy, which can flow
But from the fountain-head of love divine ?
Look to that bright effulgence ;—seest not an eye
Which pierces through, and marks each thought and
motion,
Each heaving of thy bosom ;—noting down
Within the book of doom, thy strugglings
Of pride, each gracious whisper's soft appeal
Despised, rejected !—Ah, thou art moved !—Stay not

Those tears ; the first which roused contrition sheds,
Is registered in characters of mercy
Within th' Eternal Chancery !—Then hear me !—
There is a sacred duty waits us both ;
I, in the field, will, by the side of him
I love far more than life, with jealous eye
Watch and avert each arm up-raised against him ;
Be thine, to guard his house, and cast around
The gentle glow of peace—Each grateful smile
That greets thy coming, may assuage one pang,
And bear aloft a penitential prayer
On lighter wing. Then check not, I beseech thee,
The beatings of two true and gentle hearts.
Restore the pledge, and may the love thou show'st,
Return with kindly influence on thy head,
And plead for thy forgiveness !

ELVIRA (*giving him a paper.*)

Take it ! take it !

But, fly me, Alonzo, fly me !—let far lands,
Immeasurable oceans spread between us !
We never meet again !—Begone !—Adieu !
Adieu !—for ever !

(*Exit ALONZO.*)

(*Enter* DIEGO.)

Ah ! In tears, Elvira !

What watery cloud has tracked Alonzo's steps,
So joyous erst, and gallant ? He used not
To herald sorrow to a lady's bower.

ELVIRA.

'Tis nought, 'tis nought !—He bore Don Pedro's will
To claim the pledge, as mark of my consent
To the union of his daughter with Gonzales.

DIEGO.

—Which thou, as was thy duty, hast restored ?
'Twas rightly done ;—obedience is the law
That binds meek woman to her lord's good pleasure.
But yet, 'tis said, this faithful messenger
Would, whiles, exceed the powers entrusted to him—
Thou startest, my fair cousin !—prithee, let not
Vague rumour thus disturb thee ;—the waves beat
In idle malice 'gainst the solid rock.

ELVIRA.

I know not what thou wouldst insinuate :
But if t' insult, because I have dared to snatch
A victim from thy ravenous clutch, and braved
Thy spite, defrauded of thy prey ;—if such

Be thy high-minded generous intent ;
There is protection ready at my call,
To rid me of intrusion.

DIEGO.

To insult !—

No, 'tis in friendship. She with equal truth
Speaks ill with good, when flattery would deceive.
Thou should'st not too much trust to soft-breathed
words.—

Youth is, alas ! presumptuous,—indiscreet ;—
Nor wonder is it, if his wanton speech
Break from restraint, since e'en the wariest find
A prisoned secret oft rebellious rise,
And struggle for release.

ELVIRA.

—Has then Alonzo ?—

DIEGO.

Alonzo !—Did his name escape ?—I would,
He had some friend who could advise, and say,
It were not well to boast his victories
O'er female hearts ; nor hint disparagement
In idle mirth, of names whose eminence
Commands respect :—'tis thoughtless and unseemly.

ELVIRA.

Has he dared breathe my name irreverent?—

DIEGO.

I would not wake thy wrath 'gainst one whom thou
Hast hitherto with favour looked upon.

Those who well know thy nobleness of nature,

Thy fond devotion to thy illustrious lord ;

To such, detraction's idle tongue may bandy

Its sneers, uncredited.—But amid the crowd,

Whose craving appetite by envy sharpen'd

Swallows a calumny with greedy maw,

The busy slander ranges uncontrolled,

With taunting gibe, and jest impertinent ;

Since vulgar minds delight to vent their spleen

'Gainst dignity and honour.

ELVIRA.

Thou wouldst drive me

Unto the verge of madness !—Me, a mark

Whom the base hind may eye with look askance ;

And point the ribald whisper ! No ! may death

Seal up my senses e'er one look, one breath,

Insult my fame !—

DIEGO.

The reptile with blind rage
Into his own breast darts the maddened sting :
But were it not wiser, He should pay the price
Who caused th' offence?—Meet punishment should
follow
Him, who sports daringly with thy fair name.
Elvira ! there is a zest in the pursuit
Of vengeance, that beguiles of half their keenness
Our worst of ills. It chanced, fatality
Conducted one, th' associate of my youth,
The sharer of its joys, my brother in arms
When fresh we sought the emulous field of glory,
To the same object of our first devotions.
He was the favoured—I, despised.—In secret,
Long did I brood in calm and friendly guise.
My hour of retribution came at length.
'Twas long,—'twas terrible !—How did I feast
My eyes on his protracted agony,
And taunt him in my triumph !—Ah ! it was sweet !—
Rob me of what I value most, but place
The man I hate within my grasp !—I ask

G

No more. Now, mark !—Alonzo has a bride
Who doats upon him with th' infatuation
Of a first love, and jealousy would spring
On soil so rich into exuberant growth ;
And then,—thou hold'st him at thy feet, who mocked
Thy love, and braves thy power. Revenge is sweet !
Yes, yes, 'tis sweet ! 'tis sweet !

[*Exit.*]

ELVIRA.

Thou fiend of Hell !

Tempter incarnate ! thou dost goad to frenzy,
Rousing the deadly strife his voice had lulled,
And dashing to the earth that draught which mercy
Raised to my lips !—But shall I, spurned, betrayed,
Bear to be scoffed at too ?—Thou art right, Diego !
Vengeance, I seek thine aid !—The arm of man
Is strong in outward force, but the device
Of woman works more subtly.—Thou defiest,
Dost vaunt with bold derision !—Guard thee well !
Revenge is sweet !—She holds her hand toward me—
I seize it *thus*,—and now !—

[*Exit.*]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Street.

Enter GONZALES and DIEGO from different sides.

DIEGO.

Whither such speed, Gonzales ?—Do thy steps
Thus early brush the dew, in jealousy
Lest the lark's serenade anticipate
Thy morning offering of adoration ?—
Weave close the net, fond youth !—That which is caught
With easiest effort is the soonest lost.
To-day, she swears to love thee, aye, through death :—
Soft sighs, and looks, and vows, to which the stars
Are called in solemn witness, seal the bond.—
To-morrow, some more lofty mien, some plume

More graceful, will attract her roving gaze ;
And the light play-thing woman's heart wheels round,
Now here, now there, as suits capricious fancy.
In truth, it were not wise proud man should risk
A fragment of his peace in a slight bark,
Which, without ballast on the stormy deep,
The first rough blast may sink.

GONZALES.

When the pursuit has led to fruitless care,
And toil been squandered on a barren sand,
The true philosopher sits down resigned
And tranquil, while the fool counts the expense,
And frets o'er labour lost. But those who rail
At female lightness and inconstancy
I ne'er have known, except where disappointment
Has roused despite ;—when eyes have darted frowns
In lieu of gentler beams, and breasts turned marble
In chill response to soft and tender courtings.
Nor, trust me, do I fear the variableness
Of that true heart, which could disdain allure
Most prized, for one whom Fortune has not graced
With adventitious dignity and splendour

T' attract her favour. Time or spares, or binds
More close such love as this.

DIEGO.

The rash presumption
Of young success out-runs experience.
But had I striv'n to win consent from those
Who rule the fate of her I sought t' obtain,
I would not have explored the dark byways
And windings of ill-gotten influence ;
Nor strained the links of friendship to th' exertion
Of an unrighteous and undue control,
Forcing aside the sounder judgment's sway.

GONZALES.

What thy base soul devises, let thy tongue
Speak clear ! Thine utmost malice I defy
To fix on Alonzo's strong persuasive warmth
One stigma of reproach.

DIEGO.

Bravely thou speak'st !—

The face of smooth Hypocrisy may wear
A fair appearance, as the verdure smiles
On the volcano's breast.

GONZALES.

If by insinuations and aspersions,
Pointless and vague, thou wouldest fain degrade
To thine own level what is best and noblest,
Covertly hinting what thy coward lips
Would fear to utter freely ;—thy vile arts
Are bootless, save to call down on thyself
Contempt and scorn.—But with effrontery
Open and bold, if thou wouldst bring one charge
Dishonourable to him,—in thy throat
I say, thou liest !—

DIEGO.

Ah, thou understand'st !

GONZALES.

Draw for thy life !—

*(They fight.)**(Enter ALONZO.)*

Hold, in Don Pedro's name ! How now !—Diego,
Gonzales, thus the public peace disturbing !
Wanton street-brawlers !—pray ye, sheath your swords !

*(They sheathe their swords.)**(Exit DIEGO.)*

Is 't not enough that thou should'st bear the prize,
But with an Errant's zeal must break a lance
In honour of thy lady's eyes?—Let not
The hot blood thus run riot in thy veins.
Contemptuous smile is the most fit return
From the possessor of a coveted treasure
To taunt of envy.

GONZALES.

'Twas not that!—His sneers

Had poured their malice to the empty winds,
Had they not risen in treason against one
Whom foul detraction's keenest shaft would fail
To injure.—

ALONZO.

Speak!—I do conjure thee, tell me!—

I can bear all!

GONZALES.

Nay, do not press me thus!

ALONZO.

Speak!—tell me all!—

GONZALES.

Then seek not thy revenge;

The quarrel still is mine, whom he thus dared
Outrage with insolent falsehood.—He avouched,
Beneath thy generous bearing was concealed
A double front ; his base calumnious tongue
Impugned thy truth.—But do not mark me thus—
I do repent thou drov'st me to disclosure.

ALONZO.

Oh ! could I view the mirror of my soul,
See that too faithful portraiture, and cry
'Tis clean ! 'Tis clean !—Gonzales, there's a cloud
Even now full charged, which lowers o'er my head,
And soon it will fall and cover me !—And when
All who pass by shall turn away, and look
With scorn upon me, wilt not thou then deem
The fruit of friendship filled with bitter ashes,
And wipe me from the tablet of thy heart,
As one to be forgott'n ?—

GONZALES.

Alas ! whatever
Thus jars thy conscience, has already brought
Its malison of woe !—I would not learn—
And may the eternal lap of mystery hide

The dread offence !—but from our earliest years
I have observed each working of thy soul,
Thine every rising thought, and well I know
That nought that's base, ignoble, or unworthy
Can harbour there. Thou may'st have erred, Alonzo,
Have wandered widely from the path of duty ;
But sure I am that honour will not claim
The sacrifice of friendship. No !—Should the world
Frown on thee, and thy closest ties be rent,
Each severed thread shall twine itself more strong
Around my heart ;—and when my unremitting,
Untiring zeal shall tranquillize thy breast,
'Twill be my rich reward !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A Garden before Alonzo's House.

LEONORA, *and* BIANCA.

LEONORA.

My kind Bianca, let not thy swol'n bosom
Thus speak thy sorrow!—See, my tears have stopped;—
Their founts are dry;—and the tumultuous strife
Of my cold stricken breast is sunk to silence.
The blood creeps languid, which was wont to dance
Along its joyous course, for chill despair
Has froz'n the spring of life within my veins.
Beautiful Nature! ere I learned to grieve,
Thou with my morn of bliss didst sympathize,
And give a livelier hue, and sweeter fragrance
To each fresh-wakened joy:—but now, a worldling,

False sycophant, when my sight is dim with weeping,
And would refresh itself with thy glad smiles,
Thou art blank and cheerless!—Yet, perchance, thou
veil'st

Thy face to mourn o'er her who so much loved thee!—
Ye winds, which steal in funeral stillness round,
Whispering your sighs from leaf to leaf, cannot ye
Waft from your secret caves one breath of peace
To cool my throbbing temples?—Never, never,
Shall peace revisit me!—My soul is sick,
Its faintness is to death!—

BIANCA.

Do not despond!—

My Leonora,—hang not thus thy head!—
Thy fears may yet be groundless;—false appearance
May wear the garb of truth, but wears not long;—
And hope renewed springs on in hearts most seared,
Till th' everlasting gates of darkness close.

LEONORA.

Speak'st thou of hope to me?—Her softest wiles
Are spent in vain on one, who, prodigal,
Lavished her very soul to feed the lamp,—

Then sees the exhausted light flicker and die !
My straining eyes have well nigh burst their sockets,
Searching delusion in this deadly record,
But find it not !—With fatal certainty
The dreadful mystery now stands reveal'd !—
Mark it, Bianca !—Truth itself is grav'n
In every word.—

(She reads a letter.)

“ The secret voice of friendship warns thee !”—
Friendship !—Yet who would tell a tale of anguish
Unless a friend ?—Come not the little chidings
Of infancy from those who love us most ?—
’Tis friendship’s hardest trial to disclose
Ungracious truth.—

(Reads on.)

“ He who swore to devote his life to thee is false
to his vow. The heart that should be thine is
given to another.”
Then hope farewell for ever !—With thy spent beam,
The spark of life must quickly perish too !—
Break, break, my heart ! Thou hast lost the ruling
spring ;—

Thou beat'st in vain !—

(She throws herself into Bianca's arms, and weeps passionately.)

BIANCA.

Is there no pitying angel to look on thee?—

My love, be calm !—For, though delirious passion

Divert awhile his true fidelity,

Thy soft, thy winning patience and affection,

Doubt not, will soon recall his truant heart,

Which love re-wakened will more strongly bind,

And keep it thine for ever.

LEONORA.

Do not waste

These flattering seeds where they can ne'er take root !—

My griefs will find an end ;—but 'tis not such ;—

Alonzo, if I lift my voice and weep,

I chide thee not. Alas ! what arts had I

To guard the precious boon of thy affection ?—

Thou shon'st the paragon of courts ; the meed

Of choicest admiration ever sought thee.

But my poor wit was weak ; the convent-walls

Shut out experience of the world beyond.

I could but give my love ;—but it was such
That staked existence with it !—To him the charm
Is with the freshness lost ;—he seeks another,—
While as a scathed branch I stand alone,
Sapless and withered.—I would repose, Bianca ;—
Haply these gentle moanings of the breeze
May lull to slumber.

(*Exit* BIANCA.)

Slumber !—It is the last
Oblivious sleep alone, can still despair !—
Patience, Alonzo.—Thou wilt soon be free !
The ways of death I know not, but, methinks,
The reflux stream which mantles round my heart,
The shivering of my limbs, that nameless horror
Which peoples emptiness with fearful shapes,
Warn me 'tis near !—My love, wilt thou not shed
One tear o'er her, who, with her latest sigh,
Madly adored thee still ?—and when released
From shackles of mortality, my soul
Shall, soaring upwards to the Throne of Grace,
Pour out its orisons for thee !—

(Enter SERVANT.)

SERVANT.

He who
Brought thee the former letter, urges that this
Be given without delay.

(Gives her the letter, and Exit.)

LEONORA (*Springing forward.*)

Then it is false !—
I have wronged thee, Alonzo !—Ha !—

(She reads.)

“ Full disclosure becomes imperative.—Don
Pedro’s daughter robs thee of thy Lord’s affec-
tion. The marriage, he has so zealously brought
about, is but a blind to passion.”

—What spell
Deludes my vision ?—Who ?—Don Pedro’s daughter ?—
Inez !—my half of self !—sister in love !
Partner of every hope, and tear, and smile !—
Why, ’twas but yesterday !—Did she not twine
Her arms in fondness round me—in my eyes
Read my affection, and most eloquent
Tell back in hers ?—and this in subtlty,

To pour her poison surer through my veins?—
Impossible!—some imp of darkness has
Forged, in despite, the black and monstrous treason!—
Yet—does Alonzo's eye not shrink from mine—
And his tongue falter—and pale consciousness
Hang on his wandering thoughts?—He cannot screen
Deceit with loving smiles. Truth! terrible truth!
Why wilt thou burst thy shroud?—Unhallowed nuptials,
I do forbid your banns!—Yes, tear me piece-meal—
Gorge, glut thee, Inez, o'er my quivering limbs—
But spare thy friend, Alonzo!—Add not one more
To your unrighteous sacrifice, nor pollute
Those holy rites with needless profanation!—
Merciful Providence!—do demons walk
Th' apostate world at large, with angel faces,
Masking their hideousness, to lure weak man
Defenceless on through every varying shape
Of hell-born evil?—
My brain is scorched!—my withered soul shrinks up!—
The fire within burns, tortures me to madness!—
The ground rocks under!—hot pestiferous breath
Enflames the lurid air!—Drive me not thus,

Alonzo ! Inez !—Spare me, spare !—Shake not
Your fiery scourges o'er me !—Ah, your masks
Are fallen !—Spectres, ghastly, foul !—Ye fiends,
Drive me not wildly thus !—Earth opens wide
Her yawning gulf !—Destruction calls !—The powers
Of night stretch out their arms !—I come ! I come !
(*She rushes into the house.*)

(*Enter BIANCA.*)

BIANCA.

My Leonora !—'Twas some mock-bird's note,
Which in discordant mimicry would copy
The music of her voice.—She seeks her couch,—
And may the angel of repose shed o'er
Serenity and peace !—Alas ! why is it,
That all of mould most exquisite and perfect,
Is of too delicate texture for the rub
Of life's diurnal course ?—I could have thought
A Thing so pure, whose vital air is love,
Had needed not, to fit her for that state
Where all is love, to pass through the alembic
Of frail mortality ;—for earthly passions,
In their rough broken course, too rudely jar

H

Her sensitive nature.

(*Enter ALONZO.*)

ALONZO.

Where's my Leonora?

They bade me seek her here.

BIANCA.

She has retired,

'Tis but a moment, to her chamber.

ALONZO.

Think'st

Intrusion would be welcome?—

BIANCA.

That, my Lord,

Thou knowest best.—I deem not, true affection

Can ever on a tender loving wife,

Intrude unseasonably.

ALONZO.

May that hour

Ne'er shade the face of time, when on her ear

My voice ungrateful falls!—

BIANCA.

Thou lov'st her then?—

Heard I aright?—

ALONZO.

Love her !—Is there a word
In hidden language strong enough to express
The yearnings of my heart ?—In those fair worlds,
Whose awful stilly shinings seem to say
They ne'er have fallen from their pristine brightness,
Do the pure denizens, whom earthly clay
Debases not, possess emotions high,
Unutterable, and to man revealed
But dimly ?—Such, O, such I feel for her !—
She is my guiding star ; when the sky lowers,
And darkness presses on my drooping soul,
She shines through all in undiminished lustre,
And points to hope and life !—

BIANCA.

Then haste to her,—
Whisper thy tale of fondness to her ear,
And may Love fold his gentle wings around
Two hearts thus true and faithful !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Leonora's Chamber.

*LEONORA discovered asleep on a couch.**(Enter ALONZO.)*

ALONZO.

How sacred is the stillness which breathes o'er
The head of sleeping innocence !—The air
So softly stirring wafts a holy influence !—
How light that slumber !—through oblivion's veil
Her spirit beams, as if emancipated
It ranged some purer sphere in buoyant bliss.
Oh ! for an hour, one hour of that quiet rest !—
'Tis not for me !—Dread visions haunt my dreams,
And scare repose.—Last night, methought, in frenzy
Raging, I plunged a dagger in a fair

Expanded bosom ; and as the crimson flood .
Rushed out, I saw the face—O God !—’twas hers !—
I woke from agony, and when I viewed
That form in calm unconsciousness reposing,—
The mimicry of death,—O, with what joy
I welcomed light and life !——
See, see, the blood mounts to her cheek !—Some fancy
Flits through her brain !—tis past !—How beautiful !
Yes, I could deem, thou wert a Being strayed
A moment here below, did I not feel
The pulses of thy heart responsive beat
To mine.

(He kisses her.)

Sleep on, my Love, sleep on !—and never
May one invidious care brood o’er thy pillow,
To ruffle thy serenity !

LEONORA *(awakening.)*

It fades—that radiance !—Sweet Harmony
Peal on !—’tis exquisite !—now stops !—Ye bright
Angelic faces, why do ye quit me—all
Save one, which lovingly looks on me still ?—
’Tis he !—My Love !—But where am I ?—returned,

Sent back to earth ?—Oh ! do not leave me long !—
Methought, the wanton air had kissed my cheek !—
'Tis thou, 'tis thou, my Alonzo !—

(She hides her face, and shrieks.)

No !—Thou art changed !—

Not here ! not here !—It is not me thou seek'st !—
I am thy *wife* !—

ALONZO.

Some dream has thrown its spell
Over thy fancy !—

LEONORA.

Yes ! It is a dream—
Life has to me been but a dream !—My childhood
Was spent in careless glee, but ere I learnt
To count its days of bliss,—the days were flown !—
Then to my ripening years Delusion came
Disguised more subtly ;—in my heedless zeal
I clasped her to my breast ;—but where I looked
For life, I found destruction !—
So when my lone and wearied spirit deemed
It now had reached its haven of repose,
My eyes re-open with more quickened sight

To wander o'er this desolating world,
Forlorn and hopeless!—O, since all that 's lovely
Fades as a breath, is immortality
Fixed on the pangs and throbbings of despair?—
Eternal Rest, when wilt thou set thy seal
On my closed lids?

ALONZO.

My love! My Leonora!—

LEONORA.

Thy love!—*Thy* Leonora!—Did I not say,
She is not here?—

ALONZO.

If now thy playful wit
Would banter wantonly, I could give scope
To its full range, pursuing thy gay fancy,
As hunter tracks the wild deer through the covert.—
But on thy tongue and eye an earnestness
Is marked, which thrills my veins!—To meet repulse
Where I sought greeting,—words mysterious
In lieu of love's sweet accents,—and my home
Shorn of its radiance, its joy, its hope,—
It freezes up my soul!—

LEONORA.

No speech of mine

Ever shall wound thee ;—for would my tongue upbraid,
I look on thee, and the unkind intent
Falls powerless !——

When I am gone, Alonzo !—when the cold,
Cold sod shall cover her who once was thine,
Whom once, perchance, thou loved'st ;—and that heart
Which beat alone for thee, shall beat no more ;—
Lifeless, insensible, this frame may be,—
But free above, my liberated soul
Shall hover o'er :—and as forgetfulness
Will hide within the tomb all thought of thee,
Save my idolatry ;—Oh ! when this world
Grows chill, for, trust me, that her smile will change
At times to sadness,—and thou too may'st feel
Th' inconstancy of bliss ;—then, when thy bosom
Shall be oppressed and wearied, come to her,
Who e'en through death will ne'er forsake thee !—Rear
On my green grave some sweetly-breathing emblem
Of my devotion to thee :—and as thou
Shalt pour thy sorrows forth, my spirit, soothed,

Will shed a ray of tender light across
Thy path, and kindly cheer thee to thine end!—

(*Enter BIANCA.*)

BIANCA.

In tears, my love?—I hoped that Don Alonzo
Would from thy mind dispel all shade of doubt.

ALONZO.

Dost doubt me, Leonora?—

LEONORA.

Thou canst answer—

If in thy conscious breast thou harbourest that
Would shun the face of day, would dread disclosure
Say no,—my doubts are nought.

ALONZO.

Is then the mark

So graven on my brow, that all can read?—

And wilt *thou* hate me?—*Thou*?—

LEONORA.

I was but born to love thee, and can forgive—
Forgive thee all!—Yes, though the leagured breath
Of demons blight the spring of my affection,—
Yet must I love thee!

ALONZO (*kneeling, and kissing her hand.*)

Angel of Mercy ! may that pardon mount,
And entrance find to Heaven !—

BIANCA.

Oh, compose thee !—
Thou 'rt pale and trembling still !—

ALONZO.

I came to bring
A message to thee of joy. Don Pedro holds
High festival to-night, to celebrate
With honour meet, th' espousals of his daughter.—
Thou wilt grace it with thy presence ?—

LEONORA.

Inez !—I had forgotten that name !—

(*She falls back on the couch in violent agitation.*)

ALONZO.

Look on me !—
My love !—wherefore such strugglings, such emotion ?—
Inez ! her name forgotten !—Speak, Bianca,
Unravel this mystery !—Leave me not thus
In torments insupportable !—

BIANCA.

Alas !

I know not why that name should thus disturb :
But when the mind, o'erpressed, has spent its powers
In painful communings, weak and exhausted,
The trembling of a leaf may agitate.—And who
Can follow up the attenuated thread
Of feelings spun so fine ?—Thou hast a Being
Committed to thy charge, on whom the breeze
Even of summer may too roughly blow,
And an unskilful hand would soon destroy.—
Foster and guard her, as the shepherd folds
The shorn and shivering lamb into his bosom !—
Methinks, this festive scene would yet distract
And glad her troubled mind.—My Leonora !

LEONORA.

Who calls me back to misery ?

BIANCA.

Arouse thee,—

My love !—'tis not to misery, but pleasure ;—
Proud jubilee, where valorous knights receive
The guerdon from fair lady's eyes, and bliss

Accomplished waits on those thou lov'st. Now come ;
For Don Alonzo fain would lead in triumph
His blushing bride forth 'mid th' admiring gaze,
To claim the palm ;—and this auspicious day
Would lose its half of lustre, and the union
A favourable omen, wert thou absent.

LEONORA (*starting up*).

Did'st talk of triumph ?—Aye, I come, Alonzo,
Thou to the sacrifice shalt lead thy victim,
The votive chaplet hanging on my neck ;—
And as thou strik'st the deathful blow, when I
Sink at thy feet, *her* smile of fond approval
Shall pay thee thy reward !—Come, haste, Bianca,
Deck in the weeds of bridal pageantry !—
The altar to the grave,—'tis but a step !—
The coronal my sire placed on my brow,
Thy hand shall plant upon my bier !—

(*Exeunt* LEONORA and BIANCA.)

ALONZO.

What wildness
Is written in her looks, her words disclose
The fearful wanderings of distempered fancy !—

And this for me !—Just Heaven ! when she yielded
To the blind confidence of young affection,
Deemed she that he who dared to seek a heart
So pure and spotless, could be marked with stain
Foul and indelible ?—The dazzling robes
In which her fondness had invested me
Are tarnished and stripped off !—Yet she forgave ;—
But, Oh ! what humiliation in that word
Forgiveness, to the one we love !—Her mind
Has yielded in the struggle !—Almighty Power,
Fearfully works thy retributing hand !—
Be mine to wait thy will !—

[*Exit.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Palace.

ELVIRA and INEZ.

INEZ.

I would there gleamed upon thy countenance
A ray accordant with the kindly joy
Of all around ; for thou alone look'st chill,
And wintry on me.

ELVIRA.

Thou hast my consent,—
Is't not enough ?

INEZ.

No, for that word is cold,—
I sought thy sympathy.

ELVIRA.

Why should I apear

A joy I do not feel?

INEZ.

Have I offended?—

Or has Gonzales sunk in the esteem

With which thou heretofore hast honoured him?

ELVIRA.

Why should'st thou argue my displeasure, if

My eye be fixed in thoughtfulness awhile?

Life hath enough of care to cast a hue

Of serious sadness o'er the brightest future.

INEZ.

When an untried and novel course expands,

With all the uncertainties the world presents

To youthful inexperience ;—and when ties

Of earliest affections must be widen'd

T' admit those new though stronger ;—that dear home

Where the eye opened first, those scenes belov'd,

Be quitted ; and that fond embrace which circled

Infancy be sought henceforth more rarely ;—

Hast thou no wish, no word of happy promise?—

Were there a drop of kindness at the fount,
Would it not now gush forth?—

ELVIRA.

I have no drops
To waste in tender sympathies,—my heart
Is dry and withered.—Thou to happiness
Dost look, and may thou find it!—But to one
Who treads that path and knows its weariness,
The sickness of the soul from hopes destroyed
Ere yet matured, the false deceit of what
She clung to fondliest,—why should she hail
Another entering on the same career?—
It is but mockery, then, to feign a gladness,
Where pity were more suited.

INEZ.

If not unkindly thou regardest me,
I am content.—My heart is full,—I seek
Him, in whose bosom I may pour the flood
Of agitated feeling.—There's no affection
Which findeth not within my father's breast
Some chord responsive!—

[*Exit.*]

(Enter DIEGO from the other side.)

DIEGO.

Was't not the Lady Inez
Who but this moment quitted thee?—I sought
To pay my tribute of felicitation——
But 'tis not joy that's mirrored in thine eye;—
It were ill-timed to cloud such hour of bliss
With careful musings.—

ELVIRA.

My thoughts are not disclosed to other's ken.

DIEGO.

Thou'rt right.—But since this union by thine aid
Has reached its due completion, thou should'st share
The happiness thy zeal has caused.

ELVIRA.

Diego,

Taunt me not thus!—thou know'st it was strong per-
suasion,
That biassed the free action of my will.

DIEGO.

'Tis true!—Alonzo's eloquence!—The power
Of that omnipotent tongue, which could divert,

Methinks, the stars themselves from their right course !—
But yet that tongue has played thee false—

ELVIRA.

—No more !—

He sins not with impunity, who turns
'Gainst me the vulgar gaze !

DIEGO.

To-night he leads
His beauteous wife to fearless rivalry ;
And earnest expectation waits t' award
The meed of fair perfection.

ELVIRA.

Let her win !—

Her triumph will be short !—

DIEGO.

Yet—to be scorned and braved !—Is she to court
The gaping crowd's acclaim, while rumour throws
Thy name thus loosely on the idle air,
To veer with every breath of wanton malice ?—
I would not have thee harm, though he provoke
Th' extreme of thy just wrath ;—but yet 't were meet
To move him hence, lest his vain words, ere long,

Wing to Don Pedro's ear their waywardness.
Now, prithee, listen.—Secret disaffection
Has widely spread its seeds among the ranks
Which guard our land.—Of this thy Lord has proof.
Now, if thou would convey this letter to him,
As from some unknown hand,—to breed a doubt
Against Alonzo's loyalty and truth,
Which his reluctance to accept command
Will strengthen and confirm ; his generous master
Will not a full enquiry demand,
But will dismiss him to some distant post,
Far from temptation to his wavering faith.—
What think'st thou ?—'Tis a harmless subtlety,
Which due precaution to thy purpose lends.

(Gives her a paper.)

ELVIRA.

Am I then sunk so low ;—an instrument,
But fit to serve thine ends ;—a slave, to follow
The tortuous windings of thy crafty soul ?—
Am I so vile, but fit to minister
To the foul cravings of thy base ambition ?—
Perish thy mean devices with thee !—Hence !—

(She tears the paper.)

Thy veil's too thin!—Thou countest ill, Diego,
Thinking to lure my blind resentment on,
But to make plain thy way.—Thou covetest
That honour, which, by treasonous accusation,
Thou wouldst deprive him of who rightly gain'd it!—
And I, forsooth, to silence ill report,
Must lend my hand;—must lay the treacherous plot!—
Aye, is it so?—Then hear me.—What his tongue,
Even in his inmost privacy may dare
To utter against my name, shall be revenged!—
Yes, though he hide him in the deep recess
Of midnight secresy;—in desert caves,
Where nought but savage howlings shake the air,
And mortal foot ne'er pierced;—still would it follow!—
Vengeance should still be mine—but mine alone!—
When thou canst guide Heaven's thunder to thy will,
Then, not till then, expect by me to speed
Thy dark and subtle course!—

DIEGO.

My gentle Cousin,
Thou art too serious.—I did but speak
In jest,—to prove thee,—that my friendly zeal

More safely might rebut envenom'd slander.—
That virtuous indignation,—O, it shows
The brightness of unsullied consciousness !—
'Tis well ;—for it may serve thine utmost need,—
Since bolts of surer aim than rumour scatters,
Perchance may yet assail.—
But yet a word into thine ear !—Thou hast made
Him who would be thy friend, thy bitterest foe.—
And, mark me,—not thine idlest act or motion,
Escapes my sight.—Thou understand'st—Farewell !—

ELVIRA.

Base fiend ! I do despise thy malice, as
I scorn, I loathe thy friendship !— (Exeunt.)

SCENE II.

An Anti-chamber in the Palace.

Enter ALONZO, and LEONORA in her bridal dress.

LEONORA.

I am faint!—Here let me rest awhile!—

(She sinks on a couch.)

ALONZO.

Repose thee!—

Wouldst thou return?—My Love!—this agitation
O'erpowers thy strength.

LEONORA.

No, no, a moment's respite!—

My force will yet suffice to bear me through!—

ALONZO *(after a pause.)*

That snow-white robe, just emblem of the fair
Pure breast it covers, and the bashful veil

Half hiding, half disclosing thy emotions ;
How sweetly they recall that rapturous hour,
Which gave to me, centred in thyself,
More than accumulated worlds could render ;—
Accomplished every wish !—But the still paleness
That sits upon thy cheek, is fearful contrast
With the rich hues of mantling loveliness,
Which, in their flittings through their shroud, reveal'd
Completed hopes, and self-approved affections !
O, though the dark Simoom has poured its breath
Pestiferous, through the pure and lucid air,
Distilling drops of poison from that tree
Beneath whose shade in fond credulity
Thou sought'st the balm of life ;—flee it not hopeless,
In stern disgust !—but rather, let those blossoms
Now wreathed into thine hair, serve as a type
Of fresh-reviving joy.—The orange bears
Its bloom perennial, and as one bud ripens
To perfect fruit, another still sprouts forth
With hope renewed, and never-failing promise.—
Thus, though the cankerworm one flower corrupted,
Cast not the plant away !—kill not the root !—

For, trust me, sunny smiles of love will quicken
Full and mature succession to the end.

LEONORA.

While health invigorates, the tree puts forth
Its tribute in due season to the year,
Of flower and leaf, regardless of the cold
And blighting breath of winter :—but when decay
Pierces the core, and taints the vital juice,
Its beauty, faded once, is gone for ever !—
Haply my hopes may bud afresh, and bliss
May yet await me !—but not here :—this earth
Will view it not again !—

ALONZO.

But hast thou not
Pronounced my pardon ?—Why relentless then,
Close up each avenue of happiness,
Which might be ours' still ?

LEONORA.

I do forgive,
Yes, from my soul forgive, though thou hast struck
My death-blow !—But it is not generous,—
Alonzo, it is cruel, to parade me

In triumph to Her gaze, who glorying
In my humiliation, proudly will feast
On my last agonies with unhallowed joy.

ALONZO.

She dares not to insult thee !—

LEONORA.

But who will give a pitying look to one
Deserted and betrayed by those to whom
She clung with wild devotion ?—Was't not enough,
To feel the strings that bound my heart dissever'd,
Torn rudely, and each nerve with anguish quiver
Till nature sunk ?—Was't not enough, to fall
From pinnacle of bliss to blackest depth
Of woe ;—but must the hand which cast me down
Be Hers, on whom my young and orphaned breast
Spent its full force of love ?—I had no mother—
But blessed that mercy which reserved a friend
And sister to me !—

ALONZO.

—She thy friend and sister ?—

I thought ye strangers to each other !—Sure,
Thou dream'st, my Leonora !—

LEONORA.

Mock me not !—

Why, thou hast seen her folded in my arms ;—
Witnessed our interchange of warm affection !—
Ere I saw thee, in her was centred all
I knew of love !—

ALONZO.

Eternal Powers ! Who ?—

LEONORA (*springing up.*)

Who, dost thou ask ?—Why, Inez of Alcántara !—
Inez, the destroyer of her friend !—

ALONZO.

Inez !—

LEONORA.

—Thou feign'st astonishment !—Hast not
Confessed, told all ?—or hadst thou not, the truth
Perforce would burst to light !—

(She shows him the letters.)

ALONZO (*seizing, and rapidly running his eye
over them.*)

False ! false !—By Heaven,

'Tis false !—

LEONORA.

How, false?—

ALONZO.

Malice so deadly,

Was ne'er devised by man!—

LEONORA.

Dost thou not love her then, and she love thee—

And thy heart, alienated, in its bonds

Chafe and rebel, and rush to throw them off?—

ALONZO.

No, never, never, never!—Thou art my all,—

My being,—my existence!—

LEONORA.

But, that mystery?—

That secret?—Speak! Life hangs upon thy words!—

ALONZO.

Then art thou ignorant?—must I, the first,

Dispel the fair illusion, which has clothed

To thy pure sight this world in shape of beauty

Drawn from the bright reflexion of thyself?—

Wouldst know the treacherous weakness of his heart

To whom thou yieldedst thine?—wouldst view the

throes

Of his sore-smitten, self-reproaching spirit,
 Whom thou didst vow to honour?—When first we met,
 And sanctioned by thy father, I approached,
 And sought, and won thy love,—didst thou then dream,
 That he, to whose faith thou hadst confided all,
 Most basely had betrayed that first, that best
 Of friends, who blindly loved, and trusted him?—
 Urge me no more!—

LEONORA.

'Tis torture!—Speak!—while yet
 I breathe—while yet can hear!—

ALONZO.

Affection bound

In firmest ties Don Pedro with my sire ;
 And, when beneath the force of whelming hosts
 My father fell, he to his friend bequeathed
 Myself, an helpless orphan.—Every care
 A parent's fond anxiety could yield,
 He heaped upon my youth.—With the full fervour
 Of warm, devoted, filial attachment,
 I loved him ; and be Heaven my witness ! so
 I love him still !—In an ill hour he brought
 Unto his home a bride,—young, beautiful ;—

But haughty and disdainful,—to the tender
Appeal of his affection, no response
Her heart returned,—chafing beneath the yoke
Ambition sought. Ere long his country claimed
His distant service, and to my charge, alas !
Was left that treasure he too dearly prized.—
There is an enemy which lies in wait
Within the secret breast thou know'st not of—
Time passed unheeded on ; a restlessness
Stole over me unconsciously.—The fiend
Awoke as greedy for his prey—Great God !
'Tis more than I can bear !—

LEONORA.

Go on—go on—

In mercy finish !—

ALONZO.

The deep cry of vengeance,
Echoing from high, broke the accursed spell—
Despair laid hold on me—I sought to rush
Uncalled into the presence of my Judge—
My hand was stopt—in agony of soul
I bowed me down—I sued—I cried for pity.—

The rod was stayed,—the voice of wrath was still'd,—
A beam divine fell on me,—from her throne
Mercy looked down, and led my steps to thee !—

LEONORA.

But the letters ?—

ALONZO.

—*Her* hand has penned !—'tis *hers* !

LEONORA.

Can it then be ?—Alonzo mine ?—O, speak—
Repeat it, though thy words o'erwhelm my sense !—

ALONZO.

Time nor eternity can e'er divide
My soul from thine !—

LEONORA.

—And I dare doubt thy faith ?—
Madly believe thee false ?—
O, canst thou pardon me ?—Look—speak it—say—
Say, thou forgivest ?—

ALONZO.

Can a Being of light,
Pure emanation of a happier sphere,
Ask pardon from a weak and erring man ?—

No, let me bend to thee !—My Guardian Angel,
O, cast thy mantle o'er me !—

LEONORA (*throwing herself into Alonzo's arms.*)

Then thou art mine !—O bliss !—Mine—mine, for
ever !—

But come, my Alonzo, come !—Swift let us quit
This court, this region of deceit and falsehood—
Let 's back to that retreat, where simple Nature
Bars ingress to all evil !—There will I watch
Foster, live for thee !—Quick, let 's away !—

ALONZO.

—We will—

Yet wait not me ;—but when the clash of war
Is hushed in victory, homeward my steps
Shall breathless follow, and if I yet may dare
To look for happiness, each hour of pain
Wiped from thy memory by my dearest care
Shall soothe my wounded spirit to repose !—

(*Enter ASTROLOGER.—Leonora shrieks.*)

ASTROLOGER.

The shade is on the dial—He who usurps
Almanzor's hall is childless !—He whose arms

Circle the last prop of that race, is widow'd !—
By her own hand she falls !—Shade of my fathers,
Our injured name 's avenged !— (Exit.)

LEONORA (*raising herself.*)

My knell has struck !—
Hold me not thus, Alonzo !—Seest thou not
Crime printed on my forehead ?—Fly me !—fly me !—
Thy wife 's a *murdress* !—

ALONZO.

Calm thee, my beloved !—
Compose thine agitated mind,—nor let
That rash intruder frighten with wild speech !—
Prithee, be calm !—

LEONORA.

What, dost thou not believe me ?—
Then hear.—Thy thoughts abstracted, and cold eye,
Roused me to doubt thy love ;—which this first letter
Confirmed beyond all hope.—But when the second
Named Inez as a viper in my bosom,—
A fire burned my brain,—my reason fled,—
Horror encompassed,—and with frenzied hand
I seized—I swallowed—poison !—

ALONZO (*starting back.*)

—Poison !—

LEONORA.

—'Twas slow but sure ;—and now along my veins
It steals.—My soul is palsied !—

ALONZO (*abstractedly.*)

Poison !—

LEONORA.

Doth not eternal vengeance wait on those
Who dare t' abridge the current of their days ?—
Burnings unquenchable,—intolerable
Tortures, from age to age remorseless, endless ?—
Torments of the accursed ?—See, Hell gapes wide !—
Its tribes rush forth !—They force,—they rend me from
thee !—

Save me !—I 'm lost !—I 'm gone !—

(*She sinks on the couch.*)

ALONZO (*wildly.*)

Who dare assail ?—

'Gainst all the leagured bands of Hell itself,
This arm shall e'er protect !—

K

LEONORA.

—Protect from what?—

From the fell jaws of death!—from gnawings of
The worm that never dies!—from agonies
Unheard, and insupportable—when time
Shall fail, beginning still?—Canst thou defend
From the just wrath of Heaven?—Defy it not!—
But bow thee low, beseech, implore, pray for me!—
God still may hear, and look in pity down!

ALONZO. (*kneeling.*)

Spare her, Thou Power Allmerciful!—Spare her!—
Take, take me in her stead!—

(BIANCA *rushes in.*)

BIANCA.

Where is she?—Dash it from her lips!—O give,
Give me my child—her mother's last bequest!—
Thou hast robbed me of my treasure!—

ALONZO.

—Yes, 'tis I!—

O God! 'tis I!—Where is thy justice?—Strike,
Blast me, but spare this pure, this guiltless victim!

LEONORA (*raising herself—after a pause.*)

That ray of gracious light has pierced the gloom !—
Mercy has heard my plea !—In frenzy, madness,
The deed was done !—Those drops of pity quench
Despair !—Hope glimmers through !—Angels of love,
Receive me to yourselves !—

(*She sinks back.*)

ALONZO (*groaning deeply.*)

—But leave not me !—

(*Bianca weeps audibly.*)

LEONORA.

Bianca's voice !—'tis kind !—Where's my Alonzo ?—
I feel him here !—Dim shadows veil my sight !—
'Tis dark !—my breath fails !—
Death, thou art terrible !—Cover my limbs—
Tis cold—'tis very cold——

(*She dies.*)

(*Scene closes.*)

SCENE III.

The great Banqueting Hall of the Palace.

DON PEDRO, ELVIRA, GONZALES, INEZ, DIEGO.

OFFICERS *and* LADIES *in the back ground.*—*Music.*

DON PEDRO.

There is a pure and balmy air around,
Which 'mid the crowded throng in court and camp,
I never, sure, have felt.—Alas, in vain
We waste our strength and manhood in pursuit
Of airy bubbles, which, with labour caught,
Vanish to nothingness.—Fame, honours, power,
What are ye?—Tinkling sounds which strike the sense,
But reach not to the heart.—There, there, Gonzales,
Rests Nature's Alchymy, converting all,
That else were nought and valueless, to gold.
Within that bosom's shrine a sacred lamp
Will shed on thee a bright and constant glow ;—

Carefully cherish it,—and when harsh war,
Or the world's din, oppress thy wearied ear,
This gladdening light will chase all gloom away.

INEZ (*throwing herself into Don Pedro's arms.*)

My Father!—

GONZALES (*kneeling and kissing his hand.*)

O, let me thus express those feelings
Too big for utterance!—

DON PEDRO.

My children, if

The deep aspirings of a father's heart
Could aught prevail before the Eternal Council,
The olive-branch should spread o'er ye for ever
Unfadingly!—And when, life's summit past,
Maturity conducts ye to the verge,
Your downward steps should steal in tranquil peace,
Till cradled on her breast, earth gently fold
Her arms around ye!—Hast thou seen Alonzo?—
'Tis late,—I marvel he should thus delay.—

GONZALES.

'Tis three hours since I left him, as in haste,
He went to summon his fair bride to attend
Our festival.

DIEGO (*to Elvira.*)

Dost Thou, perchance, know cause
For their detention?—

ELVIRA.

What should I know of them?—
Do I direct their orbits?—

DIEGO.

But those letters!—

ELVIRA (*starting.*)

Letters!—what letters?—

(*Alonzo, followed by Bianca, rushes in, bearing the
body of Leonora, which he casts at the feet of
Elvira.*)

ALONZO.

Tigress!—behold *thy work*!—

(*Elvira shrieks, and falls back, her eyes fixed on
the corpse. Don Pedro seizes the letters from
Alonzo's hand. All press forward, and the Cur-
tain falls.*)

GASTON DE FOIX,

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS.

THIS Tragedy is founded on a circumstance beautifully told by Froissard, (Vol. IX. Page 313 of the New French Edition,) but considerable licence is taken with the history.

Gaston III. (Phœbus) de Monçada, Comte de Foix and Bigorre, and Vicomte de Bearn, is celebrated for his chivalric qualities. Froissard, who was a contemporary and guest of the Count, gives a very interesting account of the magnificence of his Court and of his style of living. He married Agnes, sister to Charles the Bad, King of Navarre, who, at the period this Play commences, had retired to her brother's court at Pampluna, in consequence of the Count having imagined her to have taken the King's part against him in a dispute which had arisen between them.

The event on which this Tragedy turns occurred A.D. 1382, at the Castle of Monçada at Orthez, the capital of the Count de Foix's dominions: Of this Castle only a portion of the centre tower still stands, though the whole line of the walls is distinctly traceable.

On the extinction of the House of Monçada by the death of the above mentioned Gaston Phœbus, his dominions, after changing hands more than once, became the French Kingdom of Navarre, when the Spanish was merged, and the capital was transferred to Pau, in the Principality of Bearn. From the House of Albret it passed to that of Bourbon; and, on the accession of Henry IV. to the crown of France, was finally annexed to that kingdom, though it retained a nominal independence till the French Revolution.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

GASTON DE MONCADA, COUNT DE FOIX.

GASTON, }
YVAIN, } Sons to the Count.

FATHER NICHOLAS.

ST. AUBAIN.

VELASQUEZ.

JUDGES.—COUNCILLORS.—LORDS.—OFFICERS.—GUARDS.—
SOLDIERS.—ATTENDANTS.—MESSENGER.

CONSTANCE D'ARMAGNAC, betrothed to the younger Gaston,

BERTHA, Mother to Yvain.

SCENE.—Orthez, the Capital of the Count de Foix's dominions.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

An Apartment in the Castle of Monçada at Orthez.

The COUNT—FATHER NICHOLAS—ST. AUBAIN—LORDS.

COUNT.

THE sun is far advanced : I marvel much
The wingéd foot of youth should thus outstay
Our expectation.—'Tis the third day, and still
They come not.

ST. AUBAIN.

While the pulse beats high, and pleasure
Presents some fresh allurements at each turn,
The hours fly on too rapid to arrest
The eye of calculation.

COUNT.

I grudge not
Those light enjoyments which Pampluna's court
Affords to opening manhood. But when peril,
Hidden and dark, hangs on the careless step
Of innocent disport, each lengthened hour
Of absence seems big with o'erwhelming weight
Of unknown evil.

ST. AUBAIN.

But thy royal brother,
Charles of Navarre—

COUNT.

—Is the fell tiger crouching
In subtlety, till with surer grasp he clutch
Th' unconscious prey.—

ST. AUBAIN.

Thou speak'st enigmas !

COUNT.

What,

Can such thin veil conceal from thy discernment
The workings of his base and dastard spirit ?
'Tis true, with open and obtrusive force

He dares not move one step toward aggression :—
But, think'st thou, the fair lands of Foix and Bearn
Contiguous to his own, stir not his breast
With feverish throbbings of diseased ambition ;
And while he holds within his reach the heir,
The sole impediment to this proud succession,
That at his willing ear no demon stands,
And whispers treachery ?—

NICHOLAS.

Just Heaven, defend !

ST. AUBAIN.

But wherefore didst thou trust young Gaston to him
Blindfold upon a precipice ?—

COUNT.

To refuse
Had marked distrust, and that would speak of fear :
And though the ties of blood are powerless on
His recreant nature, mine could never brook
To shrink e'en from his secret machinations.

NICHOLAS.

But there is one whose anxious care will watch
The welfare of her offspring.

COUNT.

Holy Father !

The reverence due unto thy sacred office,
Respect unto thyself, and gratitude
For the warm zeal with which thou hast conducted
My son's first steps along their righteous path,
Give thee a privilege to speak, as none
Could venture else.—But let *her* name, whose cause
With constant importunity thou pleadest,
Be heard no more.—Lured by a brother's wiles,
Her heart is false toward him to whom she vow'd
Duty and love ; so let her rest with those
Whom the tongue wakes not from oblivion.

NICHOLAS.

May time clear up the mist which now o'ershades
Thy darkened judgment ! But thou wouldst not place
The son beneath an indiscriminate ban
With his ill-fated mother ?

COUNT.

Thou dost press
Upon me with undue authority.
Am I so frantic thus to quench that spring

Of joy which cheers my being? Can I mark
Those warm affections glistening in his eyes,
And trace each virtue hourly grow and ripen,
With promise to perpetuate the fame
Of our time-honoured house; nor feel that all
This world's most fair dominion would be light
As air, when balanced with the love I bear him?—
Thou hast no children, Nicholas;—O never
Canst thou know what it is to watch the unfolding
Of thine own image, with each nobler part
Developed in more pure and perfect lustre;—
To gaze on such reflection of thyself,
And say—" 'Tis mine."

NICHOLAS.

The glory of thy name
He will transmit to thy posterity
With undiminished splendour, for his soul,
Scarce tainted by our natural corruption,
Seems far more fit to range the higher spheres
Than rest on earth!—But hast thou not observ'd
The brow contracted, curling of the lip,
And eye askance with which Yvain regards him?

L

I would not augur ill from one by nature
Allied so nearly ; but his measured words
Would seem a cloak to deep, concentrated
Thoughts of unkindness.

COUNT.

Yes, I have noted well
Those inward stirrings of a breast disturb'd
By thwarted pride. His blood contaminated
Even at its source by taint of birth, rebellious
Will oft o'erboil : nor do I greatly wonder
His love towards his brother should be cool,
Who fills the place priority of years
Had given to him, were his descent unblemish'd.
No, he may frown, or openly defy ;
But secret malice never can take root
And thrive in one, who from Monçada's race
Derives his being.

(Enter GASTON, YVAIN, and Attendants. GASTON runs to the COUNT and kneels at his feet. The COUNT raises and embraces him.)

COUNT.

Welcome, my son ! thrice welcome !

Methought some magic spell had thrown a charm
To guard thee captive, or Circean cup
Of pleasure had so steeped in oblivious slumber
Thy senses, that thy memory was confin'd
Within the limits of Pampluna's court.

GASTON.

A spell more potent than enchanter's art
Could e'er devise bound each resolve, for when
The purposed hour of my departure came,
My mother, while in agonized embrace
She twined her arms around me, did not speak,
But look'd into my face with eloquence
So irresistible, that how could I,—
Whose heart seemed as it would burst my very breast
To cleave to her's,—how could I not delay
That moment, which should leave her desolate,
Bereft and widowed ?—

NICHOLAS.

O, indeed 'tis fearful
For man with blinded rashness to intrude,
And mar the spring of natural affection,
Ere time's due course has yet decayed the stem,
Or seared the leaf.

GASTON.

She bid me bear th' assurance
Of her most faithful love, and firm devotion ;
And to thy will though patient, counts the hours
Of exile, as benighted traveller waits
The wakening of the dawn.

COUNT.

What message sends
Thine uncle ?

GASTON.

Proffer of most zealous service—
He seeks a brother's place in thy regard.

COUNT.

False hypocrite ! Thinketh he thus wilily
To snare my unsuspicion ; and to hide
The sting with gentle speech ? Be not deceived !—
My sword may sleep awhile, but does not rust !
Yvain, thou stand'st apart, as if thou doubtedst
Thy share and station in thy father's love.

YVAIN.

Is it for me, my Lord, to intrude, and claim
A portion in th' outpourings of thy heart—

For me, on whom thy glorious name descends
As on the barren sand the goodly seed,
Which, withering, shows the soil's sterility?—
No, let me stand among the meaner crowd
Of humble vassalage, and by my arm
Win such respect as swoln nobility
May deign, with meed unwilling, to assign
An outcast from its pale.

COUNT.

Ever the same!—

My son, my son, why wilt thou taunt me thus?
What difference toward thy brother and thyself
In bearing can thy jealous eye discover?
Is not your honour equal, reverence paid
To both alike?—Why should thy spirit then
Be rebel to thy duty?

YVAIN.

Is it not

Enough to see my star of glory dimmed,—
Dominion shrinking from my grasp,—my name,
Which should have heralded a hero's offspring,
The badge of base dishonour?—And when Kings

And Princes should with emulous zeal have courted,
And high-born dames have deem'd them blest to gain
Alliance ; every petty lord, entrench'd
In his hereditary nothingness,
Cast on my tarnished shield a sidelong look,
And scarce in courtesy vouchsafe to pay
The greeting of equality ?—Yet does not
My life-blood flow as generous, and my heart
Swell with as noble darings as this boy's ?—
And—but the strugglings of my fevered mind
Make me o'erlook thy presence—I will retire,
And calm me to forbearance !

[*Exit.*]

GASTON.

Let not thy wrath
Be wakened by his words.—O, though his speech
May, whiles, betray the writhings of a soul
Too sensitive of whate'er might cast a shade
Upon its merited lustre, yet his heart,
His heart is with us still !—There is a feeling
Beneath those frowns, which, as I strive to soothe him,
Will e'en relax to tenderness, and burst
In genial sunshine forth.

COUNT.

O, cherish it !

And may thy gentle assiduity
Disperse those clouds of waywardness !—I would
Discourse into thy private ear awhile,
Apart within my chamber.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

Another Apartment in the Castle.

CONSTANCE, *sola*.

CONSTANCE.

How does the soul sicken with expectation,
When the strained eyes are fixed upon the curtain,
The thin division which conceals from sight
Its hope, its all !—Methinks, whole days and years,
Aye, centuries have past, since the shrill trumpet
Rung out its welcome on my panting ear,
And horsehoofs beat the pavement—but he comes not !
What sound is that ?—'Tis but the wind's rude whisper
Intrusive through the casement.—Ah, a step !—
But hold !—my countenance must false calmness borrow,
Nor must I press too forward to the greeting.

Enter YVAIN.

YVAIN.

All bliss and peace attend the Lady Constance !

CONSTANCE.

Herald of happy omen ! What but bliss

Waits their return whom absent we lament ?

But where's thy brother ?

YVAIN.

In his father's chamber.

CONSTANCE.

How fares he ?

YVAIN.

O, as one whom thou with favour

Regard'st, must fare ! What harm could threaten him ?

The surest shaft would from his breast be turn'd

Lest thou shouldst breathe a sigh.

CONSTANCE.

He bore him bravely

Amid the courtly pageant ?—

YVAIN.

Yes, as becomes

His lordly lineage. When his royal uncle
Had fixed the spur of knighthood on his heel,
His gallant bearing in the tourney mark'd
Monçada's son. His maiden lance unhors'd
His tried antagonist ; and, as the loud shout
Echoed around, his cousin's eyes betray'd,
As she bestow'd the guerdon on the victor,
That at her shrine were his devotions paid,
Haply they might be heard.

CONSTANCE.

What colours wore he ?—

YVAIN.

Azure—

CONSTANCE.

'Tis mine—The Lady Agnes—is she
As fair as fame reports ?—

YVAIN.

He in whose heart
One matchless image reigns, all others sees
Blindly. I view'd her through a darkened glass,
But the unoccupied eye would deem her cast

In happiest mould.—Yonder he comes, and I
Must to a worthier blest communion leave.

[*Exit.*]

Enter GASTON.

GASTON—(*embracing her.*)

Dearest !

CONSTANCE.

At length returned !—The wings of time
Seemed heavily laden, Gaston, since we parted.

GASTON.

Thou counted'st, then, the hours ?

CONSTANCE.

Yes, as the miser
Broods o'er his hoard ; save that to me each loss
Was profit, as the dwindled sum diminish'd
Thy term of absence.

GASTON.

Then thy thoughts would break
Beyond the bounds of space to follow me ?

CONSTANCE.

Alas ! my busy mind would paint thine image
Above, around ; each shifting shadow seem'd

To breathe with thee ; each murmuring of the breeze
Brought me thy whisper ; and, as I idly sent :
A sigh upon the gale, my fancy dreamt
'Twere wafted safe to thee !

GASTON.

Oh, what a share
Of sweetness oft lies buried in the cup
We turn from most !—That dreaded separation
I pictured with a thousand nameless fears,
Has opened but a store of new delight,
And loosed thy tongue, which but before would yield
Scarce utterance of return to my affection.

CONSTANCE.

'Tis not until disease has cast a mist
Upon the brightness of our day, we learn
To prize the sunshine glow of roseate health ;
Nor is it in the daily communings
With those we love, we feel how closely twine
The ties around our heart. But when that voice,
Which used to bear its music to my ear,
Was silent and unheard ; and when thy place
Stood vacant to my sight ; that interchange

Of thought which winged sweet language in a look,
Answered no more—Oh ! it was then the chill
Of loneliness struck cold into my breast,
And I first woke to find how much I drew
Of light and life from thee !

GASTON.

Blest was my absence, then, and how much more
Blest my return !—Methinks thy cheek has lost
A tinge of its soft hue, and a weight sits
Upon thine eyelids.

CONSTANCE.

May be, the midnight vigil
And secrecy of inward care might throw
A shadow o'er my brow ; but my pale night
Is past, and gladness sits upon the springing
Of the new morn.—But of thy noble mother
What tidings bring'st thou ? How does her generous
spirit
Bear that eternal mountain-barrier cast
'Twixt her and her affections ?

GASTON.

Alas ! as one who pines her heart away

In desolate exile. Oft would she fix her eyes
Intent upon the enormous battlement,
Wafted by strong imagination o'er
The cloud-capp'd heights, till wakened sense of ill
Bore her exhausted back.—Oh! hadst thou seen
The heaving of ill-stifled agony,
Her mute but yearning anguish, as if fate
Had whispered, "'Tis the last—prolong th' embrace—
Ye meet no more"—Thou wouldst have marvelled
I had not rather died, than from her arms
With strength unnatural have burst!

CONSTANCE.

Poor lady!

Sure there's a sternness which doth ill become
Thy father's generous nature, thus to pour
His wrath unmerited, and to fix the world's
Reproach on her to whom no charge attaches.—
'Tis cruel and unjust!

GASTON.

Forbear, my Constance!

My father cannot be unjust or cruel,
But some mysterious veil his vision darkens,

Which time will tear away. To cast a shade
Over his bright perfections, would obscure
The sun that lights my course and warms my soul.
Oh ! when I look on him, whom banded Europe
Proclaims the first in chivalric excellence,
And call him father,—love, devotion, hold him
An image to my adoration !—and
To bear his name and likeness is a prize
Prouder than diadems !—But it is the time
He bade me haste return.—Fairest, adieu !
And may those airy legions of the sky,
Charged with thy care, protect and shield from thee
Each breath that might too rudely court thy cheek,
And waft around soft whisperings of delight,
Of joy, and peace, and love !

[*Eæunt.*]

SCENE III.

The Convent of Saint Ursula.

Enter YVAIN and BERTHA from different sides.

BERTHA.

Yvain, thy presence is as the breath of heaven
Stirring the torpid deadness of the deep
With light but joyous motion. Thou art my lone
But constant star which pierces through the gloom
With gladdening radiance.

YVAIN.

Rather say, an orb
Thrown on its course at random, which man's eye
May gaze upon, but hails not at its rising.
The hind who wrings subsistence from the soil
Through the long day, the lengthening shadows give

To kindred ties of amity and love.
The very brute, whose all is in the moment,
Herds with his own !—But I stand solitary
Amid creation !—Even to the face
Of those to whom I owe my birth, an orphan !—
Or if the bonds of parentage appear,
'Tis but to crimson o'er my cheek with shame,
And make me feel more desolate !

BERTHA.

Is not a name more honoured by acquirement,
Than by tradition ?—The proud peaks of glory
Shine brightest rising from a bed of mist !
And praise involuntary, from the tongue
Of prejudice extorted, sounds more sweetly,
Than all the measured strains of flattery,
The heir-loom of hereditary grandeur.

YVAIN.

Tell to the wretch before whose darkened sight
The face of day is veiled, how large a field
Of joy is open to his quickened sense
Of sound and touch,—can that compensate to him

M

The rapture of the heaven he cannot see ?
Comes honour forth from base alloy as precious
As from the pure and unadulterate ore ?—
What though my arm should hew itself a way
Even through opposing myriads, and offer
Its slaughtered hecatombs at the shrine of glory ;
Oceans of blood could ne'er wash out the stain
Stamped on my birth !

BERTHA.

The dizziest pinnacle
Of fame may yet be scaled alike by thee,
As by the heir of kingdoms : and the beams
Shot from bright eyes may cast more ready lustre
On th' unemblazoned coat which knightly grace
And valour decorate, than on the quartered scutcheon
Of the degenerate son of long-drawn ages.

YVAIN.

Forbear, forbear, nor torture me to madness !—
Is not the general law of nature chang'd ?—
Doth not the younger, raised on grandeur's height,
Bask in her presence before whom I bow

As Persian to his god, awestruck and silent
In distant adoration ?—Doth not a bar
Strong as eternal adamant shut from me
The prize, to purchase which my all, my being,
Were but too cheap ?—And she—the destined wife
Of him, whom they in mockery call my brother ?
Brand me with ignominy,—write disgrace
Upon my brow,—but fret not thus the wound
Thy hand has planted !—

BERTHA.

Aye !—is it so ? The wound
My hand has planted, sayst thou ? Mark me, Yvain,
Look on me !—dost thou see aught in my face
That speaks of womanish weakness ?—Thinkest thou
A passion ever could this bosom enter
Which shrunk from eye of day ?—Note well my tale !
No voice e'er whispered on mine ear which need
Call up a blush of shame.—Thy noble father
In secret wooed, but honourable love
Knit us with sacred bands before the altar.
Seest thou this ring ! Thou start'st, my son !—The priest
Pronounc'd us one—shall man, presumptuous man,

Dare then these bands dis sever?—A few weeks
Called him to Spain, to prove against the Moor
His valour, yet untried. Flushed he return'd
With glory ; and when his mother, by whose care
His early years were reared, urged to his suit
The daughter of Navarre, he first disclos'd
The secret of our nuptials. She, contemptuous,
Talked of his youth,—unsanction'd indiscretion,—
Pressed on his filial reverence and duty,
Until his weakness yielded, and she drew
Compliance from his hesitating lips.
'Twas then by bribes, and wiles, and arts accurs'd,
She purchased to her will the power that stands
'Twixt God and man.—The church's dispensation,
On plea of youth and informality,
Cancelled our union,—and he, Yvain,
He who had sworn to honour me through life,
Spurned, cast me from him as a thing of nought,
And raised a worthier to thy mother's place !—
Thy blood mounts up—Yes, let it proudly flow,
It springs untainted from thy generous race !—
But seize not thus thy sword !—No 'thought must rise

Rebellious 'gainst thy father.—But shall he,
That boy, usurp thy place, and mar thine honour,
Grasping dominion, while Monçada's just
And trueborn heir bends meekly, and salutes
The hand that robs him of legitimate right?—
Son of De Foix, say, wilt thou still remain
The nothing that thou art, or boldly claim
That which the law of Heaven assigns thy birth?
Speak, and decide!—

YVAIN.

Bewilderment o'erpowers

My senses!—I, the inheritor—a scion
Unblemished of that glorious stem!—The lord
Of this proud rule!—The prospect thou unveil'st,—
Guide, lead to the attainment—I will follow
E'en though the jaws of death should yawn around!

BERTHA.

Young Gaston is the bar which most obstructs
The passage;—it must be removed!

YVAIN.

My brother!—

That kind and gracious being who alone

Can calm my stormy breast ! when thoughts of envy
Strike to my sickened soul, and in spiteful
Dark mood I shun him, still will he seek me
Gently assiduous, seize my unwilling,
Scarce yielded hand ;—and with such looks as saints
Cast on a suffering world, and words from Heaven's
Rich spring of mercies drawn, will soothe and melt
My stubborn nature, till it can hold out
No more, and in my arms enfolding him,
I vow through all change of circumstance and time,
Ever to love and honour him.

BERTHA.

Away

Then, lordly hopes !—Throw power and grandeur from
thee

As empty baubles !—give up thy just right,
As love-sick maid surrenders her soft heart
To dulcet words, and looks which steal from high
Their pencilled beams !—He must of sterner stuff
Be made, who dares demand his own when pride
And tyranny obstruct. And yet, I ween,
To vindicate the honour of a mother,

Were there no loftier purpose, might arouse
The slumbering energies of a soul most sunk
In slothful apathy—but let it pass !—

YVAIN.

Oh what a tide of passions hast thou stirr'd
From those deep caverns of the breast, where late
They slept in silence !—Yes, I will plunge to depths
Thought dare not fathom,—brace up every nerve
To its full stretch :—the gushings of affection
Shall stagnate in my veins, and nature stand
Immoveable and frozen :—but to raise
The hand 'gainst him—

BERTHA.

Dost think that I would offer
Th' assassin's steel to point against his life ?—
No, let him tread his path secure from ill,
But front not thee to rivalry !—Device
Must lead thee to thy purpose. The Count, reaping
Meet harvest of disquietude from seed
Sown by accursed unnatural ambition,
Views with averted eye young Gaston's mother,
And tastes distrust in every tainted gale

That's wafted from Navarre.—Canst thou but fix
Fair semblance of suspicion on the son,
True branch of a contaminated stock ;
I, whom he long has numbered with the dead,
Will to his presence urge my lawful claim :
And the inheritance, diverted back
To its just source, will own thy future sway,
Graced with fair guerdon of Armagnac's daughter.
Then stretch thy hand and pluck the fruit which right
Of birth should give : since fortune ne'er deserts
Those, who with vigilant zeal watch, and embrace
Her proffered aid.
Yvain de Foix, true and legitimate heir
Of an illustrious race, let nations see
That from the eagle's eyrie yet can spring
One fit to follow in its glorious flight.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.

An Anti-room in the Castle.

YVAIN *solus*.

YVAIN.

Is this a day-dream ? Does my brain play false,
And from ambition's airy pinnacle
Mock with unreal vision ? Or indeed
Is wide dominion's map spread out before me,
Mine own, my rightful heritage ?—'Tis mine !—
I seize,—I hold it !—Yvain de Foix, stand forth,
That men may own thy uncontaminate birth,
And bow before their lord !—Yes, proud Navarre,
Thy crest shall quiver, and thy craft hath lent

That which shall fell thy race !—Its usurpation
Shall sink abashed !—its glory shall be dimm'd !—
But yet to climb the ascent by tortuous path ;
To hush soft nature's pleading in the breast ;
Rudely to tear those fibres which entwine
Man with his kind :—methinks a voice within
Would whisper,—“ Stop, and though thine aim be just,
Count still the cost.”—Yet, what is it ?—Each deed
Bears its own price and value. The base hind
Who filches pelf is justly branded knave ;
But he who robs his neighbour of a crown
Is as a god to men's idolatry !—
But see, she comes, a prize which might unsheathe
The strife of empires !—My weak, coward purpose
Be strong, be resolute !—Now to break down
The fence confiding love has planted round
Her inexperienced heart, and half my way
Is at one step past o'er !

(*Enter CONSTANCE.*)

CONSTANCE.

Thou wanderest,
Like stricken deer apart from the herd.—

YVAIN.

Alas,

'Tis but too close similitude.

CONSTANCE.

But where

Sticks the barbed shaft ?

YVAIN.

Beyond the leech's aid

T' extract and medicate.

CONSTANCE.

Yet flatterers tell,

That woman's hand is oft more delicate,

And true to the touch.

YVAIN.

That grief must be most stubborn

That yields not to such powerful lenitive.

Yet there are pains, which, like the venom'd insect,

Pierce to the core, and then on subtle wing

Mount, and elude the grasp.

CONSTANCE.

Yet I would fain

Spread out such fine-spun meshes, as might catch them.—

Whitherward fly they ?

YVAIN.

Far beyond thy reach—

To the moon !

CONSTANCE.

Aye, now thou banterest.

YVAIN.

Oh no !

Thither where all things mount, which are too light
To rest on earth,—vain hopes of man's ambition,—
Visions of bliss or pride,—or, airier still,
Vows of eternal constancy and faith
By youthful lovers breathed.

CONSTANCE.

Yet say not so,—

Such vows are as the sturdy rock, unshaken
Amid the rudest strife of struggling nature !—
Thou smil'st incredulous !—

YVAIN.

Oh, mayst thou ne'er

Unveil the shrine at which thou bendst the knee !

CONSTANCE.

What ! dost thou dare defy the sovereign rule
Of love's omnipotence ?

YVAIN.

Defy it !—No,—

I cannot rise rebellious 'gainst the power
I worship and adore,—whose strength alone
Can subjugate th' affections to obedience ;
Softened and smoothed man's ruggedness ; and open,
Amid the world's drear wilderness, a spot
Of ever-blooming verdure !—But that love
Which binds the soul through every change of life,—
The polar star, toward which, unerring still,
It points its course, enticed alike in vain
By pleasure's syren voice, as 'mid the rage
Of warring tempests, undismay'd and firm ;—
Such passion strikes not deep in the light soil
Of untried boyhood :—it may germinate,
And bloom, and cast a tender odour round ;
Yet, scorched beneath the sun-rays of the world,
'Twill shrivel and dry up, and the rude eddies
Which drive across the path will root it out.—
But when the heart, matured and tempered 'midst
The strife of elements, enshrines within
One consecrated image, the rough jar

Which shakes th' unstable, the false glare which lures
Th' unpractised sight, will pass by him unmov'd ;
And, should annihilation sweep this orb
And quench it in its circuit, yet would the soul,
True to its sacred trust, bear up its treasure
To realms unfathomed, through the wreck of time
Devoted, constant still !

CONSTANCE.

Thou 'rt eloquent, Yvain !—methinks thy brother
From the same spring might inspiration quaff.
But there 's a thought and mystery in his looks
Might awe, did not the calmness of his eye
Mirror the pure serenity of heaven !

YVAIN.

Alas, poor Gaston !

CONSTANCE.

Dost thou call him poor ?
How poor ?—Why should he thus excite thy pity ?

YVAIN.

Fortune on him hath emptied all her store—
The blood of heroes, large dominion,—aye,
That gem beyond all price, thy love !—And, yet

She may, with the o'erwhelming shower, weigh down ;
For bitter herbs oft rise from the luxuriance
Of the rich pasture ;—nay, to choose between
Contending blessings may more anxious be
Even than their dearth.

CONSTANCE.

Yvain, I thee conjure,
By that regard and sisterly confidence
I ever proved for thee, since these kind walls
Received my childhood, do not hide from me
The truth :—does not Pampluna's court contain
Thy brother's true affections ?—

YVAIN.

Art thou jealous ?

CONSTANCE.

Jealous !—O, no ; but tell me—his fair cousin,—
The Lady Agnes—was there no sympathy—
No interchange——

YVAIN.

Of what ?—He ne'er confess'd—

CONSTANCE.

But there are thousand, thousand ways which show
The workings of the heart more sure than words.

YVAIN.

In truth, she seemed, among the dazzling crowd,
His centre-point of rest, for did his steps
Wander awhile, back would they soon return,
As if by some resistless magic drawn.
And when he mixed in careless converse round,
Some whispered thought would ever and anon
Be trusted to her ear.—And she—What heart
Could ever hide the secret of its early
First love in presence of its object?—But,
Thou 'rt pale and agitated—

CONSTANCE.

Hold!—Enough!—

YVAIN.

I have but told, at thine express desire,
What met my eye—what passes inward, none
Can surely scan. You know I love my brother ;
Then let not speech of mine disparage him
In thine affection.—

CONSTANCE.

Yes, I know thou lov'st him ;
Therefore, from thee, and not from the vain tongue

Of idle rumour, I would seek the truth.—

But, 'tis enough.—

YVAIN.

I have not him betray'd—

Appearance may deceive—Yet there's a test,

A ready touchstone, whence thyself may make

Sure trial—

CONSTANCE.

Aye! What test?

YVAIN.

Thou may'st have noted,

He wears about his neck a silken cord,

Which in his bosom binds some unseen treasure :—

It may be,—I know not what,—perchance a charm,—

Or token,—or may be a portrait :—yet,

To thee it should be no mystery. Urge him, then,

By his sworn faith, to show it thee, nor take

Refusal to a request so simply granted.

Should he persist in the concealment, then—

But see, he comes. I leave thee to that influence

Which beams propitious o'er united hearts.

[*Exit.*]

N

(*Enter GASTON. CONSTANCE turns from him.*

GASTON, after looking at her in silent astonishment, approaches.)

GASTON.

Nay, look on me, my Constance—Why this silence?—
Thy face averted thus?—My breast still glows
With thy kind greeting. Do not freeze it back
To wintry deadness.

CONSTANCE.

'Tis the privilege
Of th' universal sun alone, to dart
His beams on all created things alike.—
If now thou see my face suffused with gloom,
'Tis that those rays, which lightened it to joy,
No more concentrate on it.

GASTON.

I implore thee,
Explain—speak out—

CONSTANCE.

Our fathers plighted us
In infancy,—but to me such tie were nought,
Had not thy soft and tender perseverance

Won my affection.—How thy love has chang'd,
Thyself best knowest.—

GASTON.

How my love has chang'd !—
Thou banterest, or some dream o'erclouds thy mind.

CONSTANCE.

Well, well ! Be it a dream—thou art constant—true—
I banter !—Yes—Gaston, thy days have past
In festive joy ; and flattering tongues, and eyes
More flattering still, have tendered their award
Unto thy new but well proved chivalry.

GASTON.

I had a claim to kind and courteous welcome ;
But, truth to speak, my father's name procur'd
Me generous credit, and regard more warm
Even than I reckoned.

CONSTANCE.

In Pampluna's court
Affection, doubtless, breathes a freer air
Than in thy father's halls.

GASTON.

What means my Constance ?

Amid the gorgeous pageantry, my thoughts
Yet hovered o'er these walls. My heart was still,
Save when in wistfulness it turned to thee,
And sought with vain and aching eye thy presence
Among the gallant throng—

CONSTANCE.

—To hear the shouts
That hailed thy name,—to see the prize bestow'd
By fair and gentle hands, with softer words
And smiles and blushes interchanged !—Oh ! no ;
My presence might have marred the goodly scene.
Thou yet dost wear the guerdon round thy neck—
I pray thee show it me—

(GASTON *starts back.*)

—That silken cord—
Doubtless thy prize of valour is appended.—
Again, I pray thee, let me view the gift.

GASTON.

O no ! O no !—It is not that !—not that—
Ask it me not !

CONSTANCE.

It may be some charm or token

Of love—

GASTON (*in confusion.*)

O no!—Urge me no more.

CONSTANCE.

Nay, nay,

If that thou love me, Gaston, thou must show it.

GASTON.

If that I love thee!—Where is test so strong,

A trial so severe, the enterprize

So arduous, I would not joyfully

Engage to prove my love?—But this I cannot.

CONSTANCE.

Aye, thus it ever is :—with valorous deed

And proud achievement thou art prompt, because

I do not ask them ; but a thing so slight,—

This trifle, thou deniest me.

GASTON.

Once more,

Ask me whatever else thou canst devise,

Thou wilt not find me failing.

CONSTANCE.

No, again

I say, I ask no boon but this.

GASTON.

O Constance,
Thou know'st not what it costs me to withstand
One of thy lightest wishes. But I cannot,
Indeed, I cannot show thee what thou askest.

CONSTANCE.

Then, Gaston, hear me.—We do stand together
Plighted in troth. There is a mystery hid
It greatly doth concern my peace to know—
Reveal it, and no cloud shall ever darken
The heaven of our affection :—still conceal it—
Then here we part for ever !

(GASTON *shakes his head, and looks down.*)

Dost thou not speak ?—

(GASTON *looks as if about to speak, then suddenly checks himself.*)

—And is it so ? Then listen,
And that for the last time. I could have loved—
Nay, haply I did love thee, with a guileless
And undivided heart. But I would not

Receive a less return. I now absolve,
Freely absolve thee, Gaston, nor shall she,
Of whom thou doubtless wear'st the pictured image,
In me a rival or a hindrance find—
Ye have my wishes for your peace. Farewell.

[*Exit.*]

(*GASTON sinks into a chair in extreme agitation.*

Enter YVAIN, who passes across the stage apparently without seeing him.)

GASTON.

Yvain !

YVAIN.

That were a voice of sorrow ! Ha !

GASTON.

A moment I would detain thee.

YVAIN.

Time can have

No claim on one so objectless as I.

GASTON (*struggling with emotion.*)

Say not so objectless. A friend and brother
Can never want an object.—Both thou hast been
Ever to me. Even by my cradle's side

My little steps thou wouldst support ; from thee
The boyish tale came constant with a fresh
Delight upon my opening sense ; and onward
As beyond childhood I advanced, thou ledd'st
That manly sport and exercise of limb
Becoming to our gentle birth. Nor, trust me,
Have such thy kindly cares been vainly cast
Upon an arid soil ; for I have loved thee
With that attachment which is only form'd
While yet the heart is young, and unalloy'd
By the dross that passes current in the world,
I fear too widely.

YVAIN.

I know—I know it well. But wherefore thus ?
Thou floatest on the surface of a smooth
And softly-flowing stream. Nature around
Shines sweetly on thee. Voices of love are borne
On every breeze ;—then wherefore dost thou turn
To one who can add but little to the amount
Of thy full store of happiness ?

GASTON.

My store

Could never be so full, but that a smile,
A kindly word from thee, could add to it.
But high as of late I viewed my blessings heap'd,
Upraised to heaven, one cruel blast has swept
And levelled all.

YVAIN.

Aye! What dost thou mean?

GASTON.

The ties that bound me to my Constance, she
Has broken and annulled.

YVAIN.

Pshah! hath a frown
On the imperious brow of beauty kill'd?
Some lover's quarrel, passing as the wind
That blows in furious turmoil, and anon
Sinks to a zephyr.

GASTON.

No,—O no!—she deems
Me faithless to our vows;—that to Navarre
My love hath been transferred.

YVAIN.

A jealous fit,

'Tis no unfavourable sign. She fears
Thy passion may grow stagnant.

GASTON.

No, she sought
That as a token which alone on earth
Honour forbids me yield.

YVAIN.

Aye ! thus it is,—
Give them a world, and still they wish for what
May not be granted. Gaston, thou art sprung
From an heroic name :—empire attends thee :—
Thy first and dearest purpose then should be
To fit thee meetly for this high career,
And leave to others to devote those hours
Which thou dost owe to glory, to the chase
Of that most airy thing, a woman's love.
If gained, it doth but ill repay pursuit ;
If gained or lost, it is but a caprice,
Which changes with the wind. Thou hast to play
A nobler part upon the scene of life :
Leave then these lighter trifles to the crowd ;
They are not meant for thee.

GASTON.

I know not how

Affections fitly placed can hindrance cause
To glorious deeds. By me the ascent were scal'd
Easier beneath such fostering influence.
I appeal, Yvain, to that fraternal kindness,
Which ever has stood constant to my weal,
To seek her private converse, and to say
How groundless are her doubts of this true heart,
Hers, still as ever, fixt, unchangeable.
Pray her to pardon, if the imperious call
Of honour keep one secret from her eye.
Say more, say all thy zealous tongue can urge :—
Plead as if thou wert pleading for thyself :—
A brother's blessing will attend thy words.

[Exit.]

YVAIN.

And so the toils have not been spread in vain—
The bird is caught. Success breaks fair upon
The opening of my day.—And yet how doth
My inward mirror show me ? Hitherto
Though chafed and goaded by the sense of ill,

I have boldly stood before my secret judgment,
And in despite of prejudice, asserted
The only true nobility of soul.
But must I then desert my right, because,
Forsooth, some hindrance may beset my path,
Some doubts arise, which time will dissipate?—
'Tis by degrees the mind becomes inur'd
To arduous deeds, and habit will form mine.
My father—did not he break down the dam
Of natural affection to the flood
Of wild ambition, and defraud his own,
His wife and firstborn, of their due estate?
Then if I reascend through means at which
My heart revolts, the crime may rest on him
Whose crime first caused it.

(*Enter PAGE.*)

PAGE.

The Lord St. Aubain waits
Within the forest bounds, beneath the covert
Of that old gnarléd oak thou knowest of.
It is an urgent matter.

YVAIN.

I will come.

[*Exit PAGE.*]

I have read some mystery in his looks. Mine ear
Is ripe for mystery, for my mind has stray'd,
And seeks beyond life's dull diurnal range
To fix its errancy.

[*Erit.*]

SCENE II.

A retired part of the forest.

ST. AUBAIN *and* VELASQUEZ.

VELASQUEZ.

The king is a most kind and generous master.

ST. AUBAIN.

He may depend upon my zealous service.
But for Yvain—thou must deal gently with him.
For though his consciousness of birth doth fester
In his diseased mind, and an ambition
Ardent but indistinct, with still, perhaps,
A dearer feeling, doth disturb his peace ;
A pure ore shines amid the dross, and his
Is a proud spirit, which would shrink from what
It deemed unfitting or dishonourable.
We must be cautious then.

VELASQUEZ.

The King has touch'd

A chord which yet, methinks, within his breast
Doth vibrate. 'Tis but to renew the theme,
And open to his still bewildered sight
A clearer field.

(Enter YVAIN.)

YVAIN.

Velasquez !

VELASQUEZ, *(bowing low.)*

My good Lord,

Accept my humble faith.

YVAIN.

This is a greeting

Fit for the ear of great Monçada's heir :
Not for one nameless, honourless, like myself.

VELASQUEZ.

O my Lord, pardon ! It is the King's desire,
And my own inward sense of what is due
To him before whom I now stand, that thus
Unto Lord Gaston's son I pay respect.

YVAIN.

Thou'rt bearer of a message from the King
Unto the Count?

VELASQUEZ.

Once more I crave your pardon—
Not to the Count, but bearer of a secret
And confidential trust I hither came.

YVAIN.

To whom directed, then?

VELASQUEZ.

May I speak freely?—

YVAIN.

You may—

VELASQUEZ.

Unto thyself.—

YVAIN.

To me!—His Grace

Did late, in privacy, communicate
His thoughts to me. He knows that I am well
Attached unto his weal, what should he seek
Beyond what then he asked and I replied?

VELASQUEZ.

News most important, but most secret, reach'd
His knowledge since ye parted.

ST. AUBAIN.

Hast thou not
Observed upon the brow of these brave men,
Whom thy illustrious sire so oft hath led
To gallant feats of arms, a settled gloom?—
Since now their days in idleness are spent,
And he, the flower of chivalry, as years
Increase, with glory sated, leaves the course
To younger disputants, content to rest
Amid the luxuries of his court, in honour'd
And undisturbed tranquillity.

YVAIN.

In truth,
I marvel not that they whose lives so long
Were spent in camps, and to whose ear the clang
Of the loud trumpet is the sweetest music ;
Still less, that they whose yet unpractised sword
Is burning in its scabbard, should be loth
To pass their days in indolence and ease :—

But I had not observed their discontent,
Nor heard one whisper of impatience.

VELASQUEZ.

Yet

'Tis true ; and this, moreover, to thine ear
I may confide.—A message lately came
Unto my royal master, that the allegiance
Of all Lord Gaston's forces did but wait
Upon his bidding—

YVAIN.

Ha !—I straightway will to the Count report
This far-spread disaffection.—Sure the spell
Of great Monçada's name cannot be broken—

ST. AUBAIN.

A word with thee.—The spell may not be broken,
Monçada's name may yet have power to bind
The wavering fealty of these valorous hearts :
But age creeps 'on, and the good Count no more
Will lead to enterprize.—Then too the down
Of manhood has scarce browned young Gaston's cheek,
And to sustain the hereditary weight
Of fame, requires no common strength and arm.

YVAIN.

The listed field beheld with just acclaim
The essay of his prowess.—

ST. AUBAIN.

And yet, methinks.

His is a gentleness of nature, which
Bespeaks it of a softer mould than fits
A hero's son.

VELASQUEZ.

The general voice asserts,
There is a scion of that noble stem
More suited far to bear its banner forth.

ST. AUBAIN.

To see the glory of Monçada's name
Decline or fade, might rouse the inmost soul
Of all distinguished by its proud alliance.

YVAIN.

The Count to frequent proffer of my service
Is deaf.

ST. AUBAIN.

It is unworthy jealousy—

But something must be done, and promptly too,
To keep our troops to their fidelity.

VELASQUEZ.

Might I, my Lord, disclose my secret thoughts,
Nor fear to give offence?—

YVAIN.

Speak on.

VELASQUEZ.

The Count,
Now ripe with years and glory, seeks no more
The toil of arms, while in thy veins his blood
Flows vigorous.—Announce it as thy will
To lead these gallant bands to field of honour,
Each blade will glitter bravely in the sun
At the summons of——

YVAIN.

—A traitor!—aye, Velasquez?—

ST. AUBAIN.

'Tis a harsh term for one whose only care
Is to sustain the lustre of his race,
And fence his father's sovereignty with th' aid

Of those, who else allegiance might transfer
Where their steels would not rust, nor from disuse
Their arm grow powerless.

VELASQUEZ.

Thy royal kinsman,
Jealous lest aught should dim a name he loves,
Has bade me place such monies at thy service,
As with no niggard hand thou may'st maintain
Thy host in full equipment.

YVAIN (*after a pause.*)

I crave until to-morrow to consider——

VELASQUEZ.

Then at this place—

ST. AUBAIN.

And at this hour, to-morrow.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Council-Chamber.

The COUNT—FATHER NICHOLAS—YVAIN—LORDS—
COUNCILLORS—*seated*.

(*Enter* MESSENGER.)

COUNT.

Thou comest from Navarre ?

MESSENGER.

Yes, noble Count.

My royal master bade me with all speed

Convey this letter.

COUNT, (*receiving the Letter*.)

Thou may'st retire a while :

Anon we will prepare our answer.

(Exit messenger.)

(Reads the Letter, which he gives to the First Councillor.)

So !

Ever the same ;—soft silken words with deeds

But ill responding :—'tis the serpent's craft.

My lords, in dealings with my royal brother

I so distrust the bias of my judgment,

That I would have you stand between us umpires,

And I will lend my will unto your counsel.

You know, how at his pledge, albeit reluctant,

I did remit the fifty thousand livres,

Count Albert's ransom. Now, that lord has paid

In faithfulness the sum unto the king ;

And yet, as guardian of his sister's dower,

Such his pretence, he would keep from me that

Which right makes mine. My lords, would it not chafe

The blood of veriest saint, thus to be bearded

And crossed, defrauded too, by one so base,

So artful, who, with smile and hand of friendship,

Would stab to the heart ? His sister's dower !—Where,

I do beseech you, should that price be trusted,
Bequeathed her by her father, but with me,
Her wedded lord ? Speak, will ye have me still
Endure all this, and more, aye, more—for natures
Like his do but increase aggression when
They meet forbearance ; or shall I burst in vengeance
Across the mountain barrier, and demand
My own with sword and flame ?—Speak boldly, for
I do desire your judgment.

NICHOLAS.

O, my lords,
Pause, I conjure ye, ere ye pour the tide
Of wrath upon an unoffending land,
Although your claim be just. 'Tis not the hind
Who toils beneath the noontide's burning beam,
Or tends his flock upon the mountain's brow ;
Nor yet the thrifty burgher at the mart,
Careful of gain ; it is not such who keep
Your rightful due. O, why then must the humble,
The guiltless, pay the account with stream of blood,
And desolation sweep the soil, because
The monarch under whose protecting charge

They should recline, defrauds thee ! Think, how hateful
It must be to Him, whose choicest attribute
Is love, to see men rage in deadly malice,
And avarice and ambition mar the face
Of this fair earth with slaughter and destruction !
If ye have ever felt what 'tis to look
In peace around your hearth, and view your store
Secure to your enjoyment ; heard the light tongue
In jocund prattle of your smiling babes ;
Safe from alarm of danger, tasted all
That's centered in that word of magic, home :—
Pause, pause, ere yet with bold and reckless hand
You spoil those innocent joys which Providence
In mercy hath bestowed upon his creatures ;
And think that in His eye, or great or small,
Peasant or prince stands equal, save that the sum
Required from those who wield the rod of power
Is of more anxious weight, and fearfully
Will reckon against him who has misus'd
His delegated strength. O, listen, then,
Unto an old man's voice, the minister
Of peace from heaven !—

Light not your burning brands, nor bare your swords !
In God's name, I implore ye !

FIRST LORD.

Reverend father,
Thou speakst as doth become thy sacred office ;
And fitting is it that from thee should issue
Persuasive call to patience and forbearance.
But now I turn me to these martial breasts,
And ask, does it suit our honour, that the prince,
To whom we owe allegiance, should be deem'd
So weak, so nerveless, as to yield his right
Unto each bold defrauder ?—crouch as a slave
Before the wearer of a crown ? In truth,
I grieve that the avenger's wrath should fall
Save on the hand of him who calls it forth.
But such is the fate of man,—the weak must follow
The fortune of the strong. The prince who holds
The sceptre with a firm yet fatherly hand,
And guards his native lieges from oppression,
Entails ten thousand blessings on his people.
But if unjustly he provoke his neighbour,
The weight of war on citizen and peasant

Will fall, while he within his palace walls
May rest secure from harm ;—and yet 'tis thus,
And only thus, the right can be adjusted.
Since, then, King Charles from our illustrious master
Withholds his due, my voice is that our sword
Claim it beneath Pampluna's battlements ;
And if the track be marked with desolation,
He, he alone, must answer it. Again,
I do pronounce for war.

SEVERAL LORDS.

And we re-echo.

COUNT.

My lords, your wishes coincide with mine—
I too declare for war. Yet ere the word,
The irrecoverable word, be past,
That strews a land with tears and blood, thus much
I would forbear, and send a message back
Of ten days respite. Then if we see no token
Of satisfaction to my lawful claim,
We march our hosts across the giant bounds.
Should his throne totter, and his crown be humbled,
My royal brother may too late discover

It was not wise to rouse De Foix's just wrath.

My lords, do ye agree?

LORDS.

We do.

COUNT, (*to one of the Councillors.*)

Then write,

And quick dispatch such message to Navarre.

FIRST COUNCILLOR.

This council is dissolved.

(*Exeunt Lords and Councillors.*)

COUNT.

Still overcast,

Yvain!—I thought that the first note of war,

The distant name, would kindle up thy cheek,

And thine the foremost voice,—but thou art silent.

YVAIN.

My lord, it suits not one like me to dare

His voice in council ; but thou knowest that I

Am ever ready to thy service.

COUNT.

Yes,

I know thy youthful ardour burns to prove

Its worth, nor shalt thou want a station fit
To mark thee Gaston's son.

*(Enter a COUNCILLOR and the MESSENGER—COUNCILLOR
gives the Letter to the COUNT, who reads and signs it.)*

COUNT *(to the Messenger.)*

Here is my answer.

Unless within ten days I hear again,
Charles may prepare my welcome ; for I purpose
To hold high revel in Pampluna's walls.

(Exeunt COUNCILLOR and MESSENGER.)

YVAIN.

My Lord, I can no longer silence keep—
My heart is bursting with conflicting feeling.
I need not say from infancy my brother
Has been an object dear to me, nor has
Envy at his lot marred or disturbed my love.
If then, strange doubts, I know not what, arise,
Necessity alone could make me speak.—
Since our return I have observed he bears
Close hid within his bosom a silken bag.
To my demand he shakes his head and blushes,
Then says, 'tis what will soon restore his mother

In honour to her home. 'Tis the first secret
He e'er held from me ; and it is my duty
To make you sharer of it.

COUNT.

What wouldst thou mean?—

YVAIN.

I do not know. The king—

COUNT.

—Is base and dark—

A fiend in malice. But dost thou think that he
Could rouse in Gaston's breast a traitorous thought?—
No, no, thou canst not think it.

NICHOLAS.

His is a face which the bright spirits above
May look on without sorrow, for his heart
Is pure and naked as the vault of heaven !

YVAIN.

Pardon me. I bring no charge against my brother—
Yet it did not behove me to be silent.

COUNT. .

It were unworthy both of him and me
To nurse suspicion ; yet I will observe

And probe this mystery.—

(*Enter GASTON.*)

Thine uncle, Gaston,

Doubtless in wisdom and integrity,
Doth still withhold my rightful claim, whereat
I too must seek Pampluna's courteous halls,
Albeit the gallant host that will attend,
May make him greet me with a colder welcome
Than thee, my son.

GASTON.

O say not so. Thy weal

Is as his own. He loves thee with a true
And brotherly kindness; and, sure I am,
Will render thee thy due without the array
Of hostile menace.

COUNT.

Well, well, we shall see.

Meanwhile we pledge our royal kinsman. Here,
Bring me the wine-cup.

(*Attendant brings a cup of wine, which GASTON receives from him; and taking some powder se-*

cretly from a small bag, puts it into the cup, and then presents it to his father.)

COUNT (*seizing GASTON by the arm.*)

Hold there ! What is it ?

(He then draws the bag from out of his son's bosom, who appears silent and confused.)

Treason, ha !—take, mix

With the dog's food, then give, and watch the event.

(ATTENDANT takes the powder and exit. The COUNT walks up and down in excessive agitation. All look aghast. NICHOLAS goes and whispers to GASTON, who shakes his head, but does not speak. Re-enter ATTENDANT trembling and hurried.)

ATTENDANT.

The beast, ere scarce the morsel he had swallow'd,
Rolled in convulsive agony ; his tongue
Swoln, and his eyes distorted,—then with a yell
Fell on the ground and died.

(GASTON falls senseless, but is caught by the Attendants. The COUNT runs up to him.)

COUNT.

My son, My son !—

(*As GASTON begins to recover he quits him, and in a low tone says*)

Bear him away, and place a guard upon him—

Now leave me.

(*As all are going out he calls back FATHER NICHOLAS.*)

Nicholas !

(*NICHOLAS goes up to him ; the COUNT falls on his neck.*)

O God, this is

Too much !—My child, first inmate of my bosom,
O'er whom I've watched with woman's tenderness
Even from that hour when first I gazed upon
The new born gift from heaven, bedewing it
With tears of joy—O, that the next he caus'd
Should be of agony and horror !
Accurséd Charles ! was't not enough that thou
With thy perfidious arts should warp th' affections
Of her who else might lovingly towards me
Have borne her wedded state ; but must thou dip
Thy shaft in venom of so black a dye,
That demons selves might pause lest that their natures
Should grow more foul and devilish from the use !—

Corrupt a heart so new, and heretofore
So pure, with the allurements of ambition
Thus monstrous and unnatural!—make him,
Within whose breast I dreamt no guile could harbour,
A traitor and a parricide!—
O God! I could bear any thing but this!

NICHOLAS.

It is mysterious—wonderful—When He
Would strike us for our sins, His ways, indeed,
Are past man's finding out.

COUNT.

Said'st thou my sins?—

Aye, thou hast touched me home. It is a just
And righteous retribution. Eternal Power,
Where can we fly from Thee?—Thine eye doth mark,
And though revolving years may roll between
The offence and punishment, th' avenging bolt,
Though long delayed, comes not less certainly.

NICHOLAS.

My son, I did not charge thee with a crime,
Nor is it in anger always we are smitten :
But if in thy career of martial fame,

Some actions yet may hang upon thy conscience,
Some deed perchance of violence or wrong—
Alas, it is not easy to pass through
A life of arms, and keep the soul unstain'd
'Midst ever present scenes of deadly strife—
But mercy, heavenly mercy is at hand
To those who seek it. In the confessional
Pour out thy secret bosom to my ear,
Thy prayers upwafted with my own shall rise,
And plead forgiveness for thee.

COUNT.

Reverend Father,

There is a guilt that presses on my heart
Of heaviest weight. Thou shalt hear all—May heaven
Assoil her soul who first contrived, and his
Who carried it to completion!—Thou didst know
My mother—Even in her latest years
She showed but little trace of feminine nature.
In her the firmness of a line of heroes
Knew no assuaging softness, and to rear
Her son to the strong duties of his station
She needed not beyond herself to borrow.

By evil chance within my native walls
She brought up one alike pre-eminent
In mind and person. Her, devotedly
And long I loved, before I overcame
Those scruples which her duty to my mother
Raised to our union.—Then in the face of heaven
The priest united us.—Pardon me, Father,
My breath nigh fails. A summons had gone forth,
Amid Grenada's rocky heights to meet
And fight the infidel. 'Twas there, thou hast heard,
My sword first gained a not inglorious name.
On my return, my mother urged to me
A fit alliance, one which might enhance
My power and dignity. I, confused and aw'd,
For a time spake not, till at length, in accents
Broken and faltering, I confest our marriage.
It boots not that I dwell upon the scorn
With which she met my avowal, or the arts
By which she woke and stirred the fiend Ambition
Within my breast :—suffice it, that the priest,
Who joined our hands in secret, being dead,
In time she extorted my scarce given consent,

With false pretence, and witnesses suborn'd,
To appeal to Rome, where monies well applied
Pleaded my cause with force yet more effective—
In short, my marriage was pronounced as void—
Thou know'st the rest.

NICHOLAS.

My son—my son, thy sin
Is of no common hue ; and wrath doth follow
Even to the deepest caverns of the earth.
May Heaven in mercy pardon it !

COUNT.

Indeed,
The sting has never slept. I could not give
To Agnes of Navarre the affection pledg'd
Unto another. She, estranged by coldness,
Has lent herself unto her brother's wiles :
Thus my domestic charities of life
Were tainted at their source. Yet do I cling
Unto this boy. Eternal Providence,
Thou hast struck me to the inmost soul !

NICHOLAS.

Yvain ?—

COUNT.

Is my loved Bertha's son—

NICHOLAS.

—By law of nature

Thy rightful heir.

COUNT.

O lead me, Nicholas ;

Require what sacrifice thou wilt, my pride

Shall bow down to the dust. I will do all

Thou shalt command.

NICHOLAS.

It is a maze. The course

Even of duty is at times obscure.

Lives yet the Lady Bertha ?

COUNT.

I believe

She long has been at rest.

(Enter several LORDS and COUNCILLORS.)

1st COUNCILLOR.

My Lord, thy lieges

Would fain express their horror at the attempt

Against the life of one so dear and honour'd ;

And claim, although by tie of blood so link'd,
That the contriver of so foul an act
Be brought to public justice.

COUNT.

I acknowledge
This token of your love ; and with a broken
And desolate heart do yield to your demand.
Proclaim then that a solemn court be held
Forthwith.

(*Exeunt LORDS and COUNCILLORS.*)

My soul is weary, Nicholas !
My boy arraigned at the bar of public justice,
For hellish treason 'gainst his father's life !

NICHOLAS.

There's something here I cannot probe. I have watch'd,
I have known each rising thought ere yet he learnt
Himself to trace it. 'Tis impossible !—
I seek him and will solve, for solve I must,
This dark prodigious myst'ry.

COUNT.

As an angel
Of mercy go !—prove that in ignorance,

In innocence 'twas done. Throw but a doubt
Upon his guilt ; and bring, O, bring a ray
Of hope into my lorn and stricken bosom.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

A retired part of the Forest.

(*Enter YVAIN on one side, VELASQUEZ and ST. AUBAIN
on the other.*)

VELASQUEZ.

Well met, my Lord !

ST. AUBAIN.

Hast thought on the proposal ?

YVAIN.

I have.

ST. AUBAIN.

And what is thy resolve ?

YVAIN.

T' embrace it.

ST. AUBAIN.

Thou hast rightly judged.

YVAIN.

It may be so, but right
Or wrong, the die is cast.

VELASQUEZ.

It will rejoice
The king to hear thy purpose.

YVAIN.

As it serves
His private ends.

VELASQUEZ.

My Lord, thou dost mistrust
With most ungenerous doubt.

YVAIN.

Yes, I mistook—
My words slipt heedlessly. I do receive
The offer which his Grace has made of aid,
With humble thankfulness.

ST. AUBAIN.

But to our council.
The Count has sent out threats of an invasion
Against Navarre. Yet, it may be, those bands,

Those nerves and sinews of offence, decline
To follow in hostility.

VELASQUEZ.

The king
May boast him dearest friends among their ranks,
Who would be most unwilling, as I think,
To pass his frontier with array of menace.

ST. AUBAIN.

Then to the point. King Charles with liberal hand
Has scattered gold among Monçada's legions ;
And disaffection saps them to the core.
And now young Gaston's treasonable aim
Against his father's life, has, needs, remov'd
All that might yet have bound their willing service.
For Gaston, as you know, was loved by all,
Until this monstrous act. Do thou stand forth,
Proclaim that thou wilt lead them 'gainst the Moor ;
All will obey thy voice, and then thy father
Perforce will raise thee to the place of heirship
Gaston has forfeited. Art thou prepar'd ?

YVAIN, (*after a minute's consideration.*)

I am.

VELASQUEZ.

Then I will hasten, and reveal
This thy resolve in confidence among
The leaders in our cause.

[*Exit.*]

ST. AUBAIN.

Yvain, thou art silent—
I should have thought the prospect now before thee
Of fame and honour, a hero's name thy birthright,
Might stir thy soul to fire.

YVAIN.

My birthright—aye—
But let it pass.

ST. AUBAIN.

I did not deem thee cold,
When glory beckoned and command invited.
Sure thou art not a laggard in the course !—
I dreamt I knew thee well.

YVAIN.

Thou dost, St. Aubain ;
Thou knowest that, goaded by the sense of shame,
My nothingness of station, I would dare

Pluck honour from the brow of death itself ;
But this thou knowest too, that there's a blight
Upon the name of traitor, which destroys
His energies of soul, who hitherto
Has borne his conscience spotless. There's a fiend
Holding the glittering prize before my sight,
But as I stretch my arm, it seems to fall
Nerveless and palsied.

ST. AUBAIN.

Thou art too delicate—
Think'st in the records of eternal fame
There's one, who to the close fastidious eye
Of inward scrutiny, could bear the test
Of virtue unalloyed ?—No, thou must choose—
Be bold, and honour waits thee :—timid scruples
And fears will fix thee as thou art.

YVAIN.

I say,
I have made the choice ; I cannot now draw back
Even if I would.

ST. AUBAIN.

And fortune seems to sit

Upon thy helm :—thy brother's guilt has pav'd
The ready way.

YVAIN.

And when one filial hand
Has held the poison to a father's lips,
Another in secret robs him of his power.

ST. AUBAIN.

Thou dost not owe him much.

YVAIN.

Yet might he not,
Now that the staff on which he leant is broken,
Have looked even unto me ; and I receive
From his free gift that which I now must seize
With treacherous fraud ?

ST. AUBAIN, (*hesitating.*)

Your pardon ?—

YVAIN.

Nay speak out.

ST. AUBAIN.

The stain upon thy birth—

YVAIN.

Aye, thou art right—

The stain upon my birth—Yet what if that
Were washed away?—But, do not press me now.—
My soul is labouring with contending passions—
Trust me, St. Aubain! I have past the bound,
Thou shalt not find me fail.

ST. AUBAIN (*listening, then suddenly turning.*)

Ha! who is that?—

A spy on us!

(*Enter BERTHA.*)

Thy form is not unknown—
Who art thou that dost thus intrude upon
Our secret haunt?

BERTHA (*unveiling.*)

One whom no careless thought,
No idle curiosity conducts.

ST. AUBAIN.

Thine object or pretence?—

BERTHA.

The mightiest which
Can animate the mortal breast, a care
For him she bore and nourished.

ST. AUBAIN.

Ha !

BERTHA.

'Tis so—

A mother's right to watch over her son.

YVAIN.

A mother !—Yes, there's music in the name.

My mother !

(Goes up to her and kisses her hand.)

Thou look'st astonished.

ST. AUBAIN.

Yes, I thought—

BERTHA.

Thou thought'st that a dishonourable grave
Had closed o'er her, who to her son had brought
A portion but of shame ;—and buried indeed,
Beneath the marble of the breast, is all
She holds of life's diurnal thoughts and cares.
But when each passion else is frozen and dead
Within our lifeless cold humanity,
Maternal love still lingers ;—as the ray,—
The eternal lamp that flickers o'er the tomb

Of hallowed saint, last emblem of the pure
And holy flame that once inspired his breast.
To see thee stand upon the lofty base
Designed by nature, and my task is done :—
The single tie that binds me to this earth
Will then be loosed.

ST. AUBAIN.

Designed by nature, sayst thou ?—
The law of nature may be contraven'd—

BERTHA.

I know it may, but not by him or me—
A tyrant power defrauds him of his own.

ST. AUBAIN.

How !—what !—speak plainly.

BERTHA.

It may be plainly told.
Count Gaston sought and won me as his bride ;
The Church's rites united us. Ambition
And fraud procured these bonds to be annull'd ;
But not the less enregistered they stand
In sight of Heaven.

ST. AUBAIN (*eagerly.*)

Hast what can prove thy words?—

BERTHA.

I have.

ST. AUBAIN.

Then hail my Lord Yvain, the true
The rightful heritor of Count Gaston's rule!

BERTHA.

But how to bring his father to the avowal?

ST. AUBAIN.

The Count will view with willing eye the place
Young Gaston's traitorous act has forfeited,
Filled by its lawful claimant. Should he not—

BERTHA.

What then?

ST. AUBAIN.

There's that abroad will force him to it.

BERTHA.

Force!—To Lord Gaston dost thou use that word?
In truth thou know'st him not, to think that force
Would bring his will reluctant to compliance.

ST. AUBAIN.

But still that nature, lofty though it be,
May be o'erprest by irresistible power,
And bend its stubbornness—

BERTHA.

—By violence !—

Surely thou hast no treasonable purpose ?—
Yvain, remember he is thy father !—Ah !
Thou 'rt pale, my son.

YVAIN.

I know not on my cheek
What thou canst read, but that shall tell no tale
My tongue declines. King Charles has sent to offer
His aid to gain Monçada's troops to follow
My rule and guidance—

BERTHA.

—'Gainst Monçada's life !—

YVAIN.

No, no !—against his life !—long may he live
In ripe prosperity.

ST. AUBAIN.

These warriors

Are discontented with unruffled ease,
And with no niggard hand the king has lent
Such monies as may bind them to thy son,
Now fitter for the active field of arms.

BERTHA.

A curse is on all that issues from Navarre !
Black poison hangs upon that serpent's tongue,
Deadliest when blandest.—Thou hast refused his aid ?—

YVAIN, (*shaking his head.*)

Nay, I have pledged my faith—

BERTHA.

To whom ?—

ST. AUBAIN.

Velasquez,

King Charles's chosen counsellor, received
Thy son's acceptance of his friendly offer.

BERTHA.

My son, my son, it was an evil star
That shone upon thy birth. Long years of gloom
Unmerited hung o'er thee, and when fate
Now seemed to raise the curtain which had veil'd
Thy prospect, and spread out unto thy feet

The high broad road of eminence and honour,
This rash, this fatal act has marred it all,
And closed the scene for ever.

ST. AUBAIN.

Lady, thy words
Are ominous of evil at the hour
When fortune holds her ready to the grasp,
And waits but to be seized.

BERTHA.

My Lord St. Aubain,
I know thy constant friendship for my son,
So I do rein my speech ; but thou hast erred :—
And hadst thy heart been treacherous,—aye, as dark
And subtle as Navarre's, it is the counsel
Thou wouldst have urged.

ST. AUBAIN.

I am bewildered—Speak !

BERTHA.

That boy's unnatural, accursed attempt,
Has burst the tie his father's fondness wove.
Yvain's just claim, which to Count Gaston's face
I would have prest, would doubtless have prevail'd ;—

But well I know him ;—what he fain would grant,
Force, nor e'en death itself, will wrest from him :
And treason plotting round will close his heart,
Which, but for this had opened, haply to draw
Its penalty behind. Thou hast greatly err'd.

ST. AUBAIN.

A claim where justice is upheld by power
Comes irresistible.—Thou wilt soon hear
A thousand voices hail Lord Gaston's heir !

BERTHA.

Well, be it so. Perhaps a mother's care
May with too anxious a solicitude
Watch the uprising of his fortune, where
Her whole of life is centred. Then, farewell !
So may you prosper. But a word in parting—
Trust not, I urge thee, trust not to the King ;
His words are honied, but his heart is gall !—
Yvain, I would discourse with thee in private.

(Exeunt BERTHA and YVAIN on one side. ST.

AUBAIN on the other.)

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

A Private Apartment in the Castle.

(*Enter the COUNT and FATHER NICHOLAS from different sides.*)

COUNT, (*after a pause.*)

That silence is ill-omened, Nicholas.

Thou bringst no words of comfort to assuage

The pangs which tear my breast !—

NICHOLAS.

Alas, I do not.

I have tried by gentle and persuasive art

To win him to disclosure ; but his lips

Are locked in silence.—

COUNT.

Spell-bound by the power
Of that accurséd wizard. Vengeance !—vengeance !—
My soul is hungry for its debt of vengeance !

NICHOLAS.

O, my Lord, patience !—Let not thoughts like these
Feed thy diseaséd mind with aliment
Which will the more inflame and madden it.
'Tis Heaven awards the blow :—his but the hand
Which Heaven permits to wield it.

COUNT.

Thou art right—
The storm that gathers o'er my guilty head,
Must bow it in humility. Ambition,
The sin of rebel angels, urged us both ;
But me it armed against mine own ;—his arts
Struck at the days of one he feared and hated.
Yet 'twas a deed !—O, what a beautiful
Pure spirit he has marred !

NICHOLAS.

Enough ! enough !
I do conjure thee !

COUNT.

I remember well

The day, the hour.—The sun had long gone down
Beneath the glorious firmament ; and I sat
Watching the uncertain twinkle of the stars
On night's bespangled robe, if my warmed fancy
Could trace the event, which, breathless, I now deem'd
Protracted, till, by its intensity
Exhausted, expectation had sunk dormant.
Quick came the step—the smile of joy—I seiz'd
The boon as sent from Heaven ;—while gratitude,
My tongue refused to utter, fell from my eyes,
And washed the unconscious thing which called it forth.
Little I dreamt I e'er should wish that day
Had from the roll of time been blotted out !

NICHOLAS.

O, pardon me !—thy mind must not dwell there—
It will unman thee. Iron fortitude
At this most terrible hour must fix thy brow.
The weakness of mortality, though lovely
Within the privacies of life, and pour'd
Into the friendly bosom, must not meet

The prying vulgar eye. He who has fill'd
The hero's part must be the hero still :—
As the high mountain's summit towers aloft,
While clouds close o'er all meaner things below.

COUNT.

When the breast is stricken, and its founts appear
Sealed up and stagnant, then the countenance
May bear a marble quietude, nor claim
The meed of high-wrought firmness and resolve.
O ! that it were the prelude of that long
And last tranquillity, where no cruel hand
Can crush the affections which twine round the heart,
Its life and nourishment !

(*Enter OFFICER.*)

OFFICER.

My Lord, the Court
Awaits your coming.

COUNT.

We attend its call.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.

The Great Hall of Justice.

JUDGES seated. Around them LORDS standing. Enter the COUNT and FATHER NICHOLAS. The former seats himself on a chair on one side.

1ST JUDGE.

Bring in the prisoner.

(An Officer with Guards leads in GASTON, who stands opposite to his father.)

Lord Gaston de Monçada, son and heir
To our most rightful Prince the Count de Foix,
Thou standst before this bar accused, that thou,
With a most devilish intent, didst hatch
Treason and murder 'gainst the life of him,

Thy sovereign and thy father. O, it is
An act so monstrous, that the evidence
That thine own hand did mix the fatal draught,
Can scarce bring credence to the mind, although
Before the eyes 't were done.—Yet since the deed
Was undisguised and open, justly mightest thou,
Without this formal process, have endur'd
The instant penalty ; but as mercy sits
With sweetest aspect on this high tribunal,
She would exhort thee by the love thou bearest
To thine own life, to search thine inward bosom,
If aught of palliation or excuse
May there be found : for though our souls with horror
Revolt at this enormity of crime,
That loyalty with which we venerate
De Foix's heroic and illustrious race,
Would make us turn with willing ear unto
Whate'er might save it from the infamy
Of public forfeiture. We therefore urge thee,
Search well thy thoughts : our hearts will meet half-way
Thy pleading of defence or mitigation.

GASTON.

My Lords, I well do know the earnestness
With which you counsel, nor do I doubt how gladly
You would avail ye of whate'er my wit
Could conjure up to avert th' award of justice
From the offence most terrible and heinous
With which I stand arraigned. O yes, my Lords,
I well know this ;—yet more—I know how dreadful
To carry down into the grave, too early
Unclosed, the taint of an accurséd crime ;—
A direful record, which must leave a name,
Upraised till now on highest pinnacle
Of human honour, marred with the disgrace
Of turpitude most monstrous : and when ages
To come shall count the scions of its stem,
In wonder and in horror shall they pause,
Or pass in silence yet more ominous.—
O I can think of this, and how much more
Than my distracted soul can clear depict,
Or my tongue utter, yet I may not bring
One word to avert or mitigate your sentence.—
Urge me then not, I on my knees implore ye,

Ask me no more for my defence, nor let
Your hearts in silent mercy plead for me.—
Pronounce my doom,—I am prepared :—and this
But small request with my last breath I make,—
Forget that I have lived.—Here I would end,
And would protract no longer your award,
But nature speaks so powerful within,
She must be heard.—However palpable
The deed, O think not that in my breast was dimm'd
His reverence and honour. From the time
My spirit first to gradual recollection
And consciousness of things around me woke,
The earliest image stamped upon my mind
Was his ;—his voice it was brought me the first
I knew of joy ; my infant breast would swell
At his approach ; and when my reason learnt
To embody the idea, albeit vague
And indistinct, my father stood the type
Of human excellence, whom to admire,
To venerate and love, was the spontaneous
Full pouring of my fresh and ardent soul.—
And now—

(He hides his face in his hands, and pauses, then continues.)

But 'tis enough.—Ye look amaz'd,
Perchance there may be mystery in my speech,—
But let it pass—Try not to lift the veil—
The hour will come when all that is obscure
Will be disclosed, and many a deed will then
Assume an aspect differing far from what
The limited scan of men can now discover :—
Until that hour, this mystery, if it be,
Must rest unknown.—
My Lords, I have done.

1ST JUDGE.

Our fears are verified.

A deed so awful, in the face of day,
Before our very eyes, defies excuse,
And to attempt would add but to its guilt.
Lord Gaston, it doth grieve me, yea, to my heart
Each word doth pierce that my high duty calls
To speak ; yet justice must uprear her head,
Though frowns may circle round her brow. My Lord,
I am commissioned, as the joint decision

Of those at whose tribunal thou art summon'd,
Thus to declare our sentence. Thou dost stand
Accused of treason and of parricide,
Whereof the law's just punishment is—death—
Death, in what shape, or at what time, may suit
Thy sovereign to announce. And from this seat,
Robed with its due solemnity, if a voice
May reach thy soul—O take not to the grave
A conscience laden with such weight of sin.
Pray, supplicate for pardon, where alone
Such pardon may be sought. 'Tis not from him
So deeply injured, though at his knees too
Thou shouldest crave forgiveness ;—not from him,
But from the sovereign mercy of that Power
Who can wash out the stain however dark ;
From Him implore remission :—to His love
I do commit thy soul.

COUNT.

One word, my Lords,
Ere ye dismiss this most august assemblage.
I am here in triple form, as prince, as father,
And, O unspeakable horror ! as accuser.—

Custom, which in the sovereign's hand has trusted
The sword of justice, has for equal use
Placed too the sword of mercy. Now, my Lords,
Were it 'gainst any one except myself
So black and dire offence had been committed,
Be he or great or small, peasant or lord,
Justice should have her course, nor would I stay her :
Or if to spare his life who sought my own
Held out example of immunity
Whence guilt might stalk more confident and bold,
I would not stand between its punishment.
But this is so far beyond the common range,
It holds no common tenure e'en with crime.
My Lords, I know not if I e'er have shown
Aught of unmannerly weakness ;—yet, if what
I feel should bear the charge, ye may forgive it.
I looked upon that boy when first his eyes
Were opened to the day, and deemed him sent
In the maturity of age to fill
My place, and leave the vacancy unfelt.
From hour to hour and year to year I watch'd
His ripening into manhood, with that loyal

And honest pride with which a sire may view
The lengthening of his line in one who gave
Rich promise to continue it untarnish'd ;—
And truth, too, makes me own, that till the hour
When the foul venom of accursed ambition,
(How first instilled it boots it not to ask,
Though time shall tell its tale of meet revenge,)
Poisoned the spring of natural affection,
I ever found him gentle and obedient,
In modest bearing rendering all, and more
Than all I sought, with filial love and duty.—
O then, my Lords, how through the night made long
And sleepless by corroding care and sorrow,
How could I bear to see that image stand
A bleeding mutilated form before me ;—
That face I so much loved, haggard and pale ;—
Ever to meet the fixed gaze of those eyes,
Silent accusing ?—O no, it would stir
My soul to agony.—Banished from house and home,
Cut off from presence of this pleasant land,
An alien to the race from which he sprung,
Alone and friendless on the world's wide map,

Forth let him go !—And, O my Lords, to wander
O'er this cold earth in hopeless weariness,
With the unsleeping consciousness of what
He is, and was, and what he might have been :—
Ever to see man's eye averted from him,
Or hear the muttering of each passer by ;
And, worse than all, to bear the inward load
Of guilt so monstrous, so unnatural :—
Methinks that death with his array of terrors
Could scarce present a front of darker menace,
Than this uncertain clemency.

1ST JUDGE.

My Lord,

It is not ours to intercept the beam
Of heaven-lent mercy which the diadem
Of sovereign power with mild lustre sheds.
We thus confirm the mitigated sentence.—
Lord Gaston, back within the dungeon's walls
Shalt thou be borne, there to await thy lord
And father's pleasure to dismiss thee forth
An exile from the realm of Bearn and Foix :—
And may that Providence which deserts us not

Even when we most forget Him, still attend
And guide thee to His peace !

(The Court rises. GASTON rushes and throws himself at his father's feet ; who, after looking on him for an instant, turns away. The guards bear off GASTON.)

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

An open space near the Castle.

SOLDIERS *encamped and moving about.*—ST. AUBAIN and
VELASQUEZ *conversing apart.*

1ST SOLDIER.

What think'st thou of this offer, Stefano?

2D SOLDIER.

I do not like the colour of the gold.

3D SOLDIER.

What meanest thou?

2D SOLDIER.

I mean that that which comes
To rob the poor man of his richest treasure,
His honesty, howe'er it shine and dazzle,
I like it not.

4TH SOLDIER.

Nay, nay, thine is a maidenish delicacy.
He who must labour for a hard-earned living,
And peril his existence to obtain
A scanty share in what the rich possess
Even to surfeit, he cannot weigh with nice
Distinction from what hand proceeds his hire.
From lord or king, my voice is that we take
The highest price.

2D SOLDIER.

The Count doth us maintain
With princely liberality.

1ST SOLDIER.

For what?

To waste in inactivity our strength,
An useless pageantry.—I doubt but Beppo,
With motley coat and ribald tongue, is held
More worthy by the courtly throng than we,
Whose blood has bought their ease, and screened their
slumbers
From rude disturbance. O, I am sick to lead.

A life of nothings. Let us be doing, say I,
And follow him who stirs us up to action.

2D SOLDIER.

'Tis said the Count will ere long summon us—

3D SOLDIER.

—Against Navarre.—O, no, King Charles may rest
Secure within his palace, we will not rouse him.

4TH SOLDIER.

Count Gaston is grown old. His son who would,
By right, have borne his banner to the field,
A rash mad act has levelled with the dust:
So let us call the Lord Yvain to lead
Against the Moor.—Long live the Lord Yvain!

(2D SOLDIER retires.)

SOLDIERS (*draw together and shout.*)

Long live the Lord Yvain!

(ST. AUBAIN and VELASQUEZ come forward.)

ST. AUBAIN.

'Tis well.—My friends, your choice is wisely made.
The Count, in full maturity of honour,
May leave the labour and the prize of glory
To him, who, now its last support and stay,

Will not degenerate from his goodly name.

(*Enter YVAIN.*)

SOLDIERS *shout.*

Long live the Lord Yvain, our noble captain !

YVAIN, (*in apparent confusion.*)

Brave warriors, this is kind.—Your captain, say ye ?

It were an honour dearer than a crown

To lead such gallant hearts to glorious deeds.—

But 'tis an idle thought :—in the Count's service

You stand enrolled.

1ST SOLDIER.

We are no villain band,

Hereditary bondsmen of the soil,

To follow blindfold at a master's will :

Our choice is free. Say, comrades, do ye call

The Lord Yvain to lead us to fair field

Of honour, aye, and booty, or remain

Content to guard these gates, lest aught should mar

The revels of fair dames and gentle youths ?

Speak, comrades ;—speak your choice.

SOLDIERS *shout.*

Long live the Lord Yvain, our noble captain !

YVAIN.

Once more, kind friends, I thank ye. To refuse
So loud and general a call mayhap
Might argue want of spirit. I obey.
Now for the scene—Where would ye that your valour
Be first directed ?

3D SOLDIER.

Against the Moor.

YVAIN.

Thus be it.

Soon will we join Castille's assembled host
Amid Grenada's balmy-scented groves.
The dark-ey'd daughters of the infidel
From their aerial battlements shall view
The leagured banners of the cross, and quail.

ST. AUBAIN.

My counsel is that ye disband in silence,
And haste across the Pyrennean bound.
There congregate, your chiefs will quickly join.

VELASQUEZ.

My royal master gladly will receive
A host assembled for such holy warfare.

Collect your ranks beneath Pampluna's walls,
You will find most generous welcome from the king.

(Enter COUNT and OFFICERS.—VELASQUEZ retires precipitately, and exit.)

COUNT.

Brave comrades, fellows in arms in many a sharp
And hard-fought field of glory, if long time
Content with mimic battle in the tourney,
Or peaceful exercise of limb, your valour
Has slept ; methinks more eager at the call
Your falchions will spring forth. I have a quarrel,
A deadly quarrel, which must be aveng'd.
Again will Gaston lead you.—You are prepar'd ?
What !—silent !—

(He walks up to the SOLDIERS, who turn away.)

How is this !—Yvain—St. Aubain—
Speak—speak, I say.

(After a considerable pause and movement among the SOLDIERS, they come forward.)

1ST SOLDIER.

My Lord, a soldier's sword
Is a free patrimony, and his will

Is open whom to follow as it list.

We do renounce your service—

4TH SOLDIER.

—And have chosen

The Lord Yvain to lead us to far scenes

Where honour may be sought and won.

COUNT.

Yvain !

YVAIN.

My Lord, it were ill becoming one who feels

One drop of Monçada's blood within his veins,

To shrink from any source which chance may open

Of fair renown. The voice spontaneous

Of these brave men has called me to command.

COUNT.

And you accept the call ?

YVAIN.

I do.

COUNT.

Holla ! there !—

Treason !—I do arrest thee as a traitor !

(OFFICERS *come forward and seize* YVAIN. *The*

*SOLDIERS collect tumultuously, and approach the
COUNT in a threatening attitude.)*

COUNT.

Poor knaves ! what, will ye !—Strike into my bosom !
Life has but little left me now.—Your swords
Will find a welcome.

(SOLDIERS somewhat retire.)

Soldiers, a word with you.

My course has not been one unknown to fame ;
And through long years together we have reap'd
The field of glory. Comrades we have been ;
And till this hour I ever found ye faithful :
As I have sought to bind your ready service
By zeal in all that might secure attachment.
Where have ye found me, when your interest
And welfare were the question, slow in the cause ?
And not a few among you I have watch'd
With fatherly regard, as sons of those
Associates of my early scenes ;—and still,
Methinks, I see familiar faces, heads
Which time hath gently frosted over, telling
Of equal years and old companionship.—

Ye do renounce my service.—Be it so.—

I would not fence me with unwilling hearts.

Ye seek some younger arm, some bolder voice

To animate your courage—Gaston grows old—

(Murmurs among the SOLDIERS.)

He will not check your valour—No—The bond

Is cancelled.—Ye shall have your due, and then

We part.

(Murmurs increase.)

—But, mark me, none of my name or line

Shall join your force.

(SOLDIERS draw nearer, and the murmurs grow louder.)

Soldiers, once friends and comrades,

I bid ye all farewell.

2D SOLDIER.

We will not leave you.—

Long live Count Gaston !

SOLDIERS shout.

Live our glorious chief!

COUNT.

How now !—so sudden changed !—O no, I would not

Trust to the ebb and flow of doubtful faith.

A wavering fidelity is worse

Than open and declared hostility.

Ye have renounced my service.—If my name

Have lost not all its influence, I shall soon

Collect a truer and more constant band.

Once more, farewell.

(As he is preparing to go, the SOLDIERS crowd round.)

2D SOLDIER.

O, my Lord, punish not

Thus heavily the error of an hour.

We have been tampered with. The Lord Velasquez,

With gold and promises assailed our faith.

COUNT.

Velasquez !

3D SOLDIER.

He is gone.

4TH SOLDIER.

The Lord St. Aubain,

He too has practised with our loyalty,

To win our affections from their rightful course.

(COUNT looks fixedly at ST. AUBAIN. After a pause,)

Silent, St. Aubain ?—What, is each step I tread

Planted on treason !—hedged about by those

Whom I have nourished, ready with the blow
Where'er I turn !—Power, grandeur, high dominion,
Such is your penalty !—I found thee orphan'd,
A houseless wanderer. I gave thee a home,
And placed thee with my sons, to guide their steps
Along the path of honour. Such was my trust—
Such thy return !—Before to-morrow's dawn
Depart beyond the precincts of this realm ;
And, if thou prize thy life, never again
Be found within these borders.—Hence ! depart !
And thank thy fortune, that with unfettered limb
Thou art free to carry hence thy miscreant spirit.

[*Exit* ST. AUBAIN.]

SOLDIERS *shout*.

Long live De Foix, and his illustrious house !

COUNT.

De Foix's illustrious house !—'tis gone !—'tis gone !
Soldiers, if I discern these cries aright,
You still would hold yourselves unto my service.

SOLDIERS.

We will—we will.

COUNT.

Your faith must have a trial ;—
For, not content with fraudulent withstanding
My righteous claim, Charles of Navarre has poison'd
The young, the innocent heart of mine own child,
And taught to point his hand against my life.
To fill the measure of his fiendish baseness,
He has sought to tempt from your fidelity
My tried companions both in camp and field.
Such monstrous treachery shall be aveng'd.
But 'tis not with the quiet citizen,
Nor with the peasant in his humble cot,
'Tis not with such I war. Oh ! never more
May by the poor man's tears my steps be track'd.
Enough of those ! For desolation brought
Into mine own house teaches me, that he
Who bares the destroying arm against his fellow,
Carries his own curse with him. But to wield
Retributive justice 'gainst this arch-deceiver,
This cruel spoiler of our nature's kindest,
Best sympathies ;—to hurl him from his throne ;
To tear the degraded diadem from his brow ;

This shall be mine !—Say, soldiers, will ye follow ?

SOLDIERS.

We will !—we will !—Lead us against Navarre !

Down with the tyrant !

COUNT.

Comrades then again,

And friends, I do embrace your willing service.

Quick, then, prepare your harness, sharpen your steels.

Gaston and vengeance ! this shall be your cry.

Your zeal shall not long waste.

SOLDIERS (*shout with loud acclamations.*)

Gaston and vengeance !

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V.

SCENE I.

A Prison.

GASTON lying on a pallet.

GASTON.

The hours creep wearily ; with painful eye
 I have watched the glimmering of that beam—Aye, there
 It sinks—'Tis gone !—Fit emblem of the wane
 Of mine own day, so bright and joyous once—
 And now !—Mine ear's athirst even for one sound
 To break the eternal silence ; and my heart
 Pines, pants, and agonizes once again
 To feel its pulses quicken. It must not be !—

Solitude,—the withering solitude of soul
Is mine for ever !—for ever ?—No, a change
Will come, mayhap is near, and then farewell
To the intolerable penalty
I bear in this weak frame. Merciful God !
Thy dealings with thy children, like thy throne,
Are girt with clouds of majesty and terror,
No eye can penetrate ! Sensitive nature
May wince, nay must, beneath so dire a blow,
And yet may be forgiven. Honour, glory,
And all ye gaudy pageantries of life,
How are ye made for man, since to endure,
To suffer, is his debt of sojourning
Upon this blooming but deceitful earth ?
But patience, patience !—The blest saints once walk'd
Their course in patience. Nay, did not He too
Who paid our price upon the accurs'd rood
Bear all that devilish malice could devise,
And bear in patience ?—Hark !—'tis a sound !—O, no.
'Tis but the sullen echo, which tells back
My own vain words. Again !—A step !—My store
Needs no replenishing.

A voice whispers.

Gaston !

GASTON.

A voice !

Voice again.

Gaston !

GASTON.

Who calls on Gaston ?

(Enter CONSTANCE.)

CONSTANCE.

Dearest Gaston !

GASTON.

A minister of light, sent to sustain

My fainting spirit !

CONSTANCE.

'Tis thine own, thy true,

Thy plighted Constance.

GASTON.

How *my* Constance, saidst thou ?

(CONSTANCE throws herself on his neck, and weeps passionately.)

GASTON, *(after gazing on her.)*

Nay, 'tis a mockery.—My senses sure

Play false.—

CONSTANCE.

Yes; 'tis thine own!—thine own for ever!

(GASTON embraces her tenderly, and then sinks exhausted
on the pallet.)

CONSTANCE.

My Gaston, thou art faint!

GASTON.

A little moment.—

It is too much for nature's wasted powers.

CONSTANCE, (*seeing a loaf by him.*)

Thy food lies here untouched—

GASTON.

I cannot eat.

CONSTANCE.

Oh, if thou love me, I implore thee, eat!

(*She gives him some bread, which he attempts to eat,
but is unable, and falls back convulsively. CON-
STANCE kneels beside him.*)

GASTON.

'Tis past.—I am better now.—But, Constance, tell me,
What pitying angel thy compassion mov'd
To visit these cold prison walls?

CONSTANCE.

Compassion !

If through this murky dimness thou couldst see
The crimson of my cheek, thou wouldest deem
Something beyond compassion brought me hither.

GASTON.

But didst thou not abjure me while yet fortune
Shone brightly o'er my head ; and now, when sunk
Beneath a weight of shame and ignominy
From which the stoutest heart might turn away,
I trace thy gentle presence through the gloom,
And hear thy voice in tenderest accents speak.—
'Tis a delusion !

CONSTANCE.

Oh, Gaston ! ere this load of woe came o'er thee,
Thou gently floatedst on the unruffled bosom
Of the smooth summer sea, nor didst thou look
Below the surface. Thou hadst not learnt to thread
The mazes of the heart, nor known, that though
Beneath the noon-ray of prosperity
It may afford in wantonness to sport
With what it values most, the cold bleak blast.

Recalls its waywardness, and sends it back
To the kind cherishing duties of affection.—
I should have doubted what a villain dar'd
To utter against thy faith.

GASTON.

A villain !—Who ?

CONSTANCE.

Yvain !

GASTON.

Yvain !—

CONSTANCE.

These moments are too precious
To waste on those who hate or injure us.
Our vow was written above. It is mine office,
Dear duty, to watch over thee, and soothe
The sufferings of a—

GASTON.

—Parricide !—

CONSTANCE.

'Fore heaven !

There's not a soul more innocent than thine
Beneath its vault ! I ask not to divulge

The fatal mystery which seals up thy lips ;
Enough that when this world frowns darkly on thee,
Thou feel thy Constance at thy side unchang'd ;
When the storm rages most then most content
To cherish and sustain thee.

GASTON, (*tenderly embracing her.*)

Generous Constance,
Thine accents fall like balsam dew to soothe
My withering desolation.. I had thought
This earth were now one universal blank,
Till the soft radiance of thy pity broke
Upon my shivering soul.

CONSTANCE.

Nor shall it quit thee !
They will not leave thee long to linger here—
The priest shall join our hands, then it will be
The daily, the sweet solace of my life
To share thine every sorrow, and avert
With fostering affection the chill winter
Of man's unkindness.

GASTON.

May Heaven reward thee, Constance !—Yet not so—

This cannot—cannot be.—Were it my lot,
On my ancestral eminence to sit
Decked with dominion ; it would be my pride,
My bosom's dearest joy, to see thee there
Receive spontaneous homage of all hearts,
Fairest and loveliest, as in place the first.
But since a wise but hidden Providence
My doom in characters mysterious,
Though legible, has traced, that from my home
An alien and a wanderer I am driven,
Stamped with an infamy so terrible
That every eye must shun me,—to take thee
A partner in this dread award ;—to see
Thy gentle innocence shrink and shrivel up
Beneath the poisonous breath of shame, which ever
Will as my native atmosphere surround me ;—
To feel thy tender steps torn by the rude
And pitiless thorns that throng this rugged earth :—
O, it would bring an aggravated horror
To every ill.—Yes, I can front with calm
And settled brow whatever may befall
Myself alone :—to have thee share, my Constance,
I could not bear it !

CONSTANCE.

O, do not say that !

Thou hast tasted and experienced how empty
Is human grandeur, that what man chief prizes
Is but an airy unsubstantial shadow :
Then, canst thou think thy Constance would regret
Such toys of fortune ?—Safer far, my Gaston,
Safer and happier beneath the shelter
Of thy love would she nurse, than if expos'd
On the high peaks of life.—We will find some spot
By mortal foot unhaunted, there together
With nature in her fairest mood we will hold
Sweet communing ; or when, through brake and fell
Thou searchest to provide our frugal board,
My hand shall rouse the cheerful hearth to greet
Thy glad return. And, like the flowers which blossom
In their chief pride amid the desert wild,
Love, joy, and peace shall with luxuriant growth
Twine round that home, where no rude hand shall pluck,
Nor breath calumnious blight, nor evil eye
Destroy and wither with invidious spell.—
My Gaston, thou canst not refuse my claim
To share a lot so tranquil and secure.

GASTON.

When in the secret workings of its will
Heaven puts its finger on him, for weak man
To strive with impotent attempt to raise
A garden in the desert, where he knows
That he is sent to roam restless and strange,
'Twould be to mar the merciful design
Of infinite Goodness, and pervert the kind
Intent which hath a draught so bitter mix'd.
Constance, I know not if my eyes again
Shall look upon the beautiful vault above ;
Nor if my thread of life will yet be lengthen'd
Since something tells within that it is spun
Too finely for endurance :—but think not,
Whether enclosed within the dreary clasp
Of this dark dungeon, or cast forth adrift
On the unknown ocean, that I shall be alone.—
In the still watches of this changeless night,
When the soul pines and sickens in unrest,
Then, ever and anon upon mine ear
A gentle voice will steal, and whisper peace.—
Amid men's crowded haunts, though none may turn

A look of kindness on the houseless stranger,
Still will an eye of pity and of love
Regard me ;—or if on the waste I sink,
A hand will raise and lead my fainting steps :—
And when the agonies of death fall on me,
A care even tenderer than thine, my Constance,
Shall waft my spirit to its wished for home.—
O, he who cannot hear that voice, nor see
The watchful eye, nor feel the ministering care,
He, he may be alone—but I shall never !—
A faintness has come o'er me.

CONSTANCE.

Rest thee, my Gaston.

*(He falls back on his pallet, and she remains by his side
—Scene closes.)*

SCENE II.

A hall in the Castle.

(Enter the COUNT with LORDS and OFFICERS on one side.

—YVAIN, guarded, on the other.)

COUNT.

My Lords, there was a time when the wide branches
Which spring luxuriant from the parent stem
Were deemed its richest honour ; and to see
Around the board of cottage or of palace
A fair and sturdy lineage was reckon'd
Its best inheritance. But that name which once
Were surety of respect, to me has been
A shame—a deadliest curse !
A few brief days ago, and you beheld me
The father of two sons, on whom mine eye,
Nor mine alone, did dwell complacently.

In my short-sighted pride I joyed to hear
The voice of all spontaneous confirm
The whisperings of my heart!—One to my lips
Offered the poison-cup ; the other, fearful
Lest that he be outdone in treacherous wrong,
Has disaffection sown in the hearts of those
So loyal erst and faithful, till they call
Him to supply my room.—O no, thou play'st
Upon a slippery precipice, who think'st
To rob me of my right.—But my own blood !—
I would bare my breast to the assassin's knife,
I would face whate'er man's malice could invent
With front unmoved :—would drink the cup of suff'ring
Even to the very dregs, were I spared this !
But that such treason should be hatched by those
Whose cradle I have watched ;—on whom I lavish'd
The full outpourings of a father's love !—
May ye die childless, nor experience
The direst evil which Heaven's wrath can send,
A child's ingratitude !

YVAIN.

My Lord, I stand not here to deprecate

The justice of thine anger, nor to utter
What may assuage thy bitterness of spirit.
That to a blind undutiful ambition
I lent an ear ;—that, when the venal cry,
Bought by insidious dealing, but not mine,
Called me to thy command, the inward voice
Of loyalty I silenced ;—this I deny not—
My life is forfeit, nor do I ask remission.
Yet once more may I speak without displeasure,
And ne'er again will words of mine offend.
Thou rear'dst my youth as fit for one who bore
Thy name ; and such of honour, as the crowd
Obsequious proffered,—such was mine.—But since
My mind first woke to my reality
Of station, to my nothingness and shame,
A dark corroding stream crept through my frame,
Blighting and withering the natural growth
Of high and generous feeling.—Thou hast marr'd
One, who if born beneath a happier star,
Perchance might not have sunk into the tomb
Ignoble and inglorious.—But let it pass—
All this I could have borne with due submission,

Burying my griefs in silence, were alone
The injury mine.—But there's another,—one
To whom at the altar thou didst plight thy troth,
One meet to sit beside thee, and to claim
Lawful respect and reverence as thy wife ;
Her,—her thou hast cast off, and slurred a fame,
Than which more pure and spotless the wide sun
Beholds not, till beneath oblivion's veil
Reproach has found a shelter !

COUNT (*in great agitation.*)

What dost thou mean ?

YVAIN.

Pardon, my lord, my lips shall sin no more.

Here, lead me to my doom.

(*Enter BERTHA veiled.*)

BERTHA.

Justice !—

COUNT.

For whom ?

BERTHA.

For one who justly claims it.

COUNT.

Who art thou

BERTHA, (*unveiling herself.*)

Dost thou not know me?

COUNT, (*going up to her, and then shrinking back.*)

Bertha!

BERTHA.

Nay, fear not!

That name can bring no terror to a conscience

So clear as thine.

COUNT.

I thought thee long since dead.

BERTHA.

And dead I have long been to all that makes

Reality of life. Each morn, and even,

And midnight, do I immolate at His shrine,

Who calls beneath His wings the faint and weary,

The crushed affections of a wounded spirit.

Nor had we met again, till that dread hour,

When those who loved, or injured, face to face

Before the assembled myriads shall stand

Of Earth, and Hell, and Heaven!—Never, till then

T

Should Bertha's name have spoilt thy tranquil rest,
Had not a spell—one which can force the dam
In desperate courage to the lion's lair,
Compelled me to thy presence.

COUNT.

His life is safe.

BERTHA.

Thou wilt not steep thy hands in a child's blood!—
I thank thy clemency!—Thou hast stood, my Lord,
So long on the proud and dizzy height of glory,
That time, I ween, must from thy memory
Have swept the thought of meaner things below.
Thou know'st this pledge.—

(Shows him a ring : he appears strongly agitated.)

Nay, do not think I come
To claim thy perjured vows, and broken faith.—
A higher judgment than this world can offer
Must settle that account.—But 'tis for justice
Toward him, Lord Gaston, that a mother cries.
A shame unmerited, a false disgrace,
Have stung that generous bosom e'en to madness.
And 'tis a soul that, were its force recall'd

Into its rightful current, would hand down
De Foix's illustrious name without reproach.
He is thy first-born, thy legitimate heir,—
Render his due ; then shall Heaven's peace fall on thee,
And pardon all the wrong thou hast done to me.

COUNT.

A voice has risen from the depths ! A form,
No airy shadow of uneasy fancy,
But the substantial record of old guilt,
In real mysterious presence stands before me !
Crime whiles may hide itself beneath the cloud
Of things forgotten, but, immortal still,
It lives to front us when we least expect.
Yvain, one terrible deed has from thy brother
Torn his high name and station. Thy offence,
Though great, is of less hideous shape, nor plac'd
Beyond the reach of pardon. Let submission
And dutiful obedience henceforth rule thee.
The day may come when thou may'st win th' award
Of heirship from my willing confidence :
Till then let modest zeal conduct thy steps.

YVAIN.

To duty and obedience, my Lord,
Thou hast a right, which, albeit seduc'd
By the false voice that whispered in my ear
Honour and high achievement, now repentant,
Methinks, my heart could never more forget.
The heart of youth, like the volcano's, nurses
A raging element, which to assuage,
Or guide in its safe channel, well requires
A tempering hand : the flame is fierce enough,
It wants no breath to rouse and quicken it.
Had thy maternal—(*turning to Bertha*) but mistaken
care
Controlled, not goaded till it burst restraint,
The rebel will ;—calmed with wise words the fever
Of my vexed spirit ;—taught me to crush the spring
Of a blind passion, nor with false device
To mar the faith of confident affections ;
Mother, thou yet might have possessed a child,
To soothe, support, and cherish thee !
My Lord, thou bidst me look to fill the place

My brother's deed has forfeited. The sin
Lies heavy on my soul. Hear my confession ;
And as again thou fold'st him in thine arms,
If thou have yet forgiveness,—pardon me.—
King Charles, who oft in private conference
With seeming carelessness, yet with a firm
True hand had probed my bosom's festering wound,
Raising vague shapeless shadows of ambition,
At our departure, with that look of trust
He knows how to assume, disclosed to me
That he had given to my brother, to calm
The bitterness of grief at leaving her
To whom he owed his birth, a drug, which mix'd
Unnoticed with the wine-eup, would recall
A husband's lost affections, and restore
His mother to thy love. A harmless thing
He said, and then a smile as of contempt
Of his own philtre curled about his mouth.
Why this were told to me I know not, save
To lull suspicion should I see the cord
About his neck which Gaston strove to hide.—

When the fiend riots in the breast he points
A thousand ways to the accomplishment
Of harboured evil. To supplant my brother
In *her* regard,—to sap thy confidence,—
To tear him from thy heart, and win his place,—
Such were my thoughts—

COUNT.

—Then he is innocent !

Merciful God, I thank thee !

YVAIN.

Take him back

Unto thy love,—he well doth merit it.
And now, for the last time, I stand before thee—
Ne'er shalt thou see me more, who feel, although
Unworthy else, that I am still thy son.
Thither I go where fortune may conduct,
And my good sword the narrow road may open
Of fair and honourable fame. My father,
I leave thee ; but I leave thee not alone :
Thou still hast one whose filial care will tend
Thy downward steps. May Heaven benignantly

Regard thy lengthened years, in the white robes
Of peace enfolding thee !—Scenes of my youth,
Familiar faces, all farewell for ever !

[*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

The Prison.

GASTON *asleep on the pallet.* CONSTANCE *watching beside him.*

CONSTANCE.

Hist ! hist !—what step is that ?—He sleeps !

(*Enter NICHOLAS.*)

NICHOLAS.

'Tis well !

Sweet emblem of the soul's repose, even then
When all around frowns darkliest.

CONSTANCE.

Reverend father,
Thy feet come slowly to the sufferer's bed ;
And consolation from my lips is weak.
To desert the ruin when the pile has fall'n,—
'Tis but a natural instinct.

NICHOLAS.

No, my daughter !

I do not merit thy reproach. Enough
My heart is stricken—add not this.—The hour
When the award of justice spoke his doom,
With breathless speed I hastened to his mother.

CONSTANCE.

Could she explain ?—

NICHOLAS.

In agony she heard

The dreadful tale, but could afford no clue
To the developement. It were lost time
To try the secret from that arch-deceiver,
The author of this mystery of evil ;
So with quick step I hied me back. He sleeps—
Thou shakest thy head—(*Sees the bread.*)

His food untouched !—How long ?

CONSTANCE.

'Tis now three days. He has no power to eat it.

NICHOLAS.

Great God, thy ways are dark ! (*Goes up to him.*)

It is a restless,

A broken slumber. O ! how changed that cheek,
That wan emaciate frame !—The stream of life
Flows fitfully.

(COUNT *rushes in.*)

COUNT.

My boy ! my injured boy !—

(GASTON *springs up and throws himself into the COUNT's
arms.*)

GASTON.

My father !—

COUNT (*after a pause, looking at him.*)

Thou art ill, my child.

GASTON.

O no !

Thy voice could heal a worse disease than mine,
The sickness of the heart.

COUNT (*again pressing him to his bosom.*)

Heaven hath in mercy

Restored my boy.

GASTON.

Thou knowest then the truth ?

COUNT.

I know it all—But wherefore didst thou keep
Such torturing silence ?

GASTON.

O, it was an oath
That bound my lips,—so dreadful, that the thought,
Sudden and terrible,—when in the first
Confusion it had nigh escaped me, join'd
To the unspeakable horror of the deed,
Palsied and laid me senseless.

COUNT.

Fiend incarnate !

GASTON.

But sure thou never doubttest me. Thou knewest,
That ere I yet could speak, devotion to thee
Was my heart's ruling spring. Never was father
Beloved as thou.—To seek thy life ! O no !
Thou couldst not think it.

COUNT.

Constant in my heart
The voice of nature pleaded. Yes, I felt
It could not be ; and yet——Thou art faint, my child !

Lean on me—I can support thee now ; but soon
My strength must lean on thine. (*Sees the bread un-
tasted.*) Ah!—

(*NICHOLAS and CONSTANCE come forward.*)

CONSTANCE.

O, my Lord, give it him.—Try, try to eat.—

GASTON.

O God it was the power I lost, and not,
Thou know'st 'twas not, the will.
(*Attempts to eat ; and falls back into the COUNT's arms.*)

Death, thou art come
Too soon !—I lately thought thou couldst not come
Too soon !—My father, Constance, Nicholas,
Have mercy on them Heaven. (*Dies.*)

The Curtain slowly falls.

THE END.

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